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BY JOHN GALLISHAW

THE ONLY TWO WAYS TO WRITE A STORY
TWENTY PROBLEMS OF THE FICTION WRITER

"Twenty Problems of the Fiction Writer"

by JOHN GALLISHAW

A Series of Lectures on the Craftsmanship of the Modern Short-Story

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TWENTY PROBLEMS OF THE
FICTION WRITER

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AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

THE material of this book had its origin in a series of talks to a group of people who were interested in the problems of the fiction writer, particularly in the modern short-story.

It soon became apparent that in the space of time available for the discussion of a single problem I could not always take up all the phases of that problem. So from time to time I added extra information. In this way the material has grown. Now, added to and amended, the results are presented here.

The informal method of address of one writer discussing with a group of other writers the problems of his craft I have kept the same.

It is my hope that a conscientious student of craftsmanship will find in these discussions much that will cut down for him the time and labor involved in mastering craftsmanship, for it has always been my contention that there is no problem confronting the modern writer which has not already been met and solved by some other writer.

This volume can be most effectively used, when read in conjunction with the Case Book ("The Only Two Ways to Write a Story"). Together they constitute a complete home-study unit.

Lest it should seem to the uninitiated that the emphasis is upon technique, I wish to state my position clearly. Craftsmanship goes beyond technique, and includes artistry. Yet it is only a means to an end. That end is to create an illusion of reality for the reader: an impression of clearly defined and differentiated people, seen dramatically, at important moments, against a definite background of time and place.

A knowledge of craftsmanship encourages originality. It enables a writer to concentrate upon the unique and significant quality of his material, with the certainty that he will be able to create whatever illusion he desires, artistically and surely.

JOHN GALLISHAW.

551 FIFTH AVENUE,
NEW YORK CITY,
February 25, 1929.

INTRODUCTION

In order that you may realize what is involved in the production of a short-story it is necessary first that you understand that a short-story is merely one form of art, and that the first purpose of all art is to stir the feelings or the emotions of the beholder. Although the purpose of all art is the same, the medium of expression varies. The artist's choice of medium through which to stir the emotions of others depends usually upon his special temperament or special equipment. He may choose the novel. He may choose painting. He may choose sculpture. He may choose the moving-picture, or he may choose the drama. But whichever one of these media he chooses, he will always be concerned with creating an emotional reaction in the consciousness of the observer. When I say "observer" I mean the person whose emotions are appealed to through the medium of any one or more of his senses. Because the short-story is art it must naturally appeal to the emotions. Like all fiction, it must attempt to substitute for reality. Joseph Conrad, in his Preface to "The Nigger of the Narcissus," states this requirement very clearly, thus:

"Fiction—if it at all aspires to be art—appeals to temperament. And in truth it must be like painting, like music, like all art, the appeal of one temperament to all the other innumerable temperaments whose subtle and resistless power endows passing events with their true meaning, and creates the moral, the emotional atmosphere of the place and time. Such an appeal to be effective must be an impression conveyed through the senses; and in fact, it cannot be made in any other way, because temperament, whether individual or collective, is not amenable to persuasion. All art, therefore, appeals pri-

marily to the senses, if its high desire is to reach the secret spring of responsive emotions."

This necessity for appealing to the senses will become apparent to any writer upon examining the most successful writing. All writers who have made any systematic study of their tasks are aware of this requirement. Thackeray, commenting upon a writer who was indifferent to the taste of food, said that such a one is bragging of a defect in himself, not of a virtue. "It is like boasting," he says, "that one has no ear for music or no eye for color. ALL of a man's senses are the arts."

Since all forms of art are concerned with creating emotional effect, and since the short-story is a form of art, then the short-story must have some special quality of its own to distinguish it from other forms of art concerned with creating emotional effects. Emotional response there must be, but any assumption that a short-story is concerned only with creating emotional response is a misconception. To insist only upon the necessity of creating emotional effect is to harp only upon the resemblances of the short-story to other forms of art, whereas the short-story writer or the student of short-story writing, while concerned always with the necessity for rendering sensory impressions, is concerned also with those distinguishing features which make the short-story different from other forms of art.

As distinguished from the other forms of art the short-story is in the narrative group. Painting and sculpture seize a passing impression, and fix forever a *moment of time*. It may be a great moment, but always, however, it is that single great moment, and that moment alone. There is no passage of time. The distinguishing quality of narrative is that it is the orderly recital of a number of closely knit events or happenings, leading out of or into great moments, and involving a passage of time. In this group you will find the history, the play, the novel and the short-story. There is always, of course, the narrative-poem. But the narrative-poem is a story, either long or short, told in verse rather than in prose. One thing

becomes apparent at once, and it is that the short-story, like its sister arts, the drama and the novel, is successful in so far as it translates experience *in terms of art.* It creates an illusion, and produces an emotional impression of the passage of time by showing *characters in action.* Your story may take thirty minutes to read, yet it may cover in its action a day, a month, a year. Instead of living thirty minutes, your reader has been transported out of himself and has lived a week, a month, or a year. You produce this emotional effect by taking a section out of all time, and showing *characters in action.*

A very simple diagram will serve to illustrate my meaning.

Out of the line A—D, which we assume to be limitless time, we set off that period of time which we wish to portray (B—C). B—C may be from six in the morning to seven in the evening. It may be from January first to February fifteenth, or it may be from the year 1810 to 1816, or, imaginatively, the years 2000 to 2100. The period of time will be the period necessary to show the action that will convey to the reader the information you wish him to possess.

The task of the writer is to create an illusion, so that the reader will believe implicitly that the action represented takes place within the limits laid down by the writer.

This line B—C represents also the ordinary humdrum emotional level along which the life of the ordinary man or woman runs. From this level, the story must raise the reader to the point E. Upon your ability as an artist depends the grading of the ascent. For the present, we shall merely indicate the necessity, and discuss it in more detail later.

In form the modern short-story really is a compromise between the form of the history and the form of the play. The history and the play are diametrically opposed, whereas the

fictional-story, long or short, combines qualities in each, availing itself of the advantages of both without the disadvantages of either. In form the distinguishing feature of the play is that ordinarily all the talking is done by the players. The distinguishing feature of the history is that ordinarily all the talking is done by the author. A person, therefore, who proposes to write fiction may render his material (*a*) in the medium of the dramatist (the words of a character or characters exclusively), or (*b*) in the medium of the historian (the words of the author exclusively), or (*c*) in a combination of the two (author's comment interluding the words of a character or characters). Whichever choice he makes is limited. This third method is the most common. Fictional narrative is just that: a combination of history and of conversation; that portion which is conversation being rendered in the dramatic form. Good fictional narrative takes the best from the historian and the dramatist; poor fictional narrative borrows only the worst.

The author may find it easier to render his observation in his own words rather than in the words of a character or characters, but in this case he is considering himself rather than the reader, and Arthur Sullivant Hoffman, former editor of *Adventure,* has pointed out that there are three factors to be taken into consideration in the writing of fiction: One is the artist: the second is the material with which he deals; and the third—and hitherto the most neglected—is the reader. The author chooses either the narrative or the dramatic method for one of two reasons. He chooses the narrative method because he finds it easier, or he chooses the dramatic method because the material which he has observed or which he proposes to render is essentially dramatic; but the reader is almost invariably more interested in the material which is rendered dramatically and convincingly than that which is rendered in narrative, for the simple reason that nobody will ordinarily leave a prize-fight while it is going on to read an account of a prize-fight. Ordinarily a man observing a murder would not leave the scene of that murder to go home to read about an-

other murder, provided always that he is interested in knowing what goes on during the progress of the murder. I doubt very much if anybody has ever, during the progress of a play in which he was interested, turned from the stage to read the outline of the happenings of that play in book or manuscript form. The reason is that reading an account of what took place—that is to say the recital by an outsider of what he has seen—is not so interesting as the actual observation of the happenings themselves.

In dramatic presentation there is a greater illusion of reality, of actual observation than in the narrative method. That is why the form employed by the dramatist is a safer model for the short-story writer than that employed by the novelist. The dull part of any story is likely to be the author's explanations. The limitations of the dramatist's medium force him so to arrange the happenings of his play that the actors, through the speeches and the pantomime, must give all the explanation, and they must give it in a manner which is both interesting and convincing. The modern short-story is much nearer in form to the drama than it is to the novel. A short-story is not by any means a short novel. It is a special modern form. It has nothing to do with the "tale" of Poe. It is as far removed from it as the steamship *Leviathan* is from an old dugout canoe, and this is said without any intention of disparaging the genius of Poe or his great constructive ability. When I say that I am very doubtful indeed if Poe's tales submitted to an editor today would be accepted, I do not mean to decry Poe at all. What I mean is that if Poe were writing today he would be writing in the modern form and would be just as much a genius as he was in 1840.

The primary function of the modern short-story is still to cause an emotional reaction in the reader by presenting to him a series of impressions. The extent to which these impressions will convey an illusion of reality to the reader depends upon the ability of the author to present his material. But in addition to the presentation by which emotional reactions are caused, there is in the production of the modern short-story

the necessity for narrative unity, which is achieved through the pattern or arrangement of turning points in the plot. It is through its plot or the arrangement of its happenings that the short-story achieves its *narrative* interest. The writer of the short-story, therefore, has two main tasks: each interdependent, but each at the same time independent. The first is the plotting, which has as its aim emotional and dramatic effect. Dramatic form alone does not give dramatic interest. When we come to a discussion of the Laws of Interest we shall go into this. For the present you must accept it as a fact.

A short-story is a series of arranged dramatic happenings. It is one person's account of things that have happened to him or to somebody else. He may tell in the first person about events of which he was the center and the moving force, or he may tell in the first person about events of which somebody else was the center and the moving force, or he may tell the story in the third person. Telling it in the third person, he may present the happenings objectively without any comment more than is necessary for the visual rendering of the actions of the actors, or he may analyze the thoughts of an actor. But the special characteristic of the modern short-story is that all these happenings must be the outgrowth of the responses of a central actor to a certain condition or state of affairs. This condition is a stimulus to which the actor responds in such a way that his responses project a narrative problem. No matter what sort of story you propose to write, regardless of your stage of progress in fiction writing, your raw materials will always be the same: stimuli, actors and narrative turning-points, or crises. Likewise your artistic purpose will always be the same: to characterize the actors in your story by showing their responses to the various stimuli of life, in such a way that certain easily comprehended traits are made clear to the reader.

Let me take this occasion to warn you against a very natural tendency: that of trying to go too fast in your attempt to become completely master of short-story craftsmanship. This tendency, if indulged, will defeat your purpose. Be sure,

first, that you have grasped thoroughly the principles you are studying before even beginning to study other principles. Several principles have been hinted at or implied already, and their existence cannot be ignored. They all bear upon one another; but they can, fortunately, all be considered in their own good time. Do not worry now about such considerations as Narrative Interest or Dramatic Interest, about the Choice of Narrator, or the Point of View, about Plotting, or Structure or Sequence, or any other principle except the necessity that the recurring pattern of Stimulus, Actor, and Actor Response shall be present in every story which you will present to your reader.

It is well to pause here a moment and consider the individual whom you propose to stir by your writings. He is in the first place a bored person. He—or she—is in the position of a person sitting at a window looking out upon the world. The first interesting thing presented to him will catch his attention. He is not using his imagination. His consciousness is virtually a blank. You can, depending upon your skill, cause in his consciousness any impression or series of impressions you desire. It was Flaubert who told Maupassant, "The Public is composed of numerous groups who cry to us:

'Console me.'
'Amuse me.'
'Make me sad.'
'Make me sympathetic.'
'Make me dream.'
'Make me laugh.'
'Make me shudder.'
'Make me weep.'
'Make me think.' "

Only one of these groups Flaubert conceives to be asking for instruction; the others all ask to be diverted from the consideration of reality. Mrs. Katharine Fullerton Gerould says that "The first business of Fiction is to entertain." To this

Miss Ruth Suckow takes wrathy exception, and sees fiction as the vehicle for pointing out the significance of life. But it is not necessary that you ally yourself with either of these ladies; you can be on the safe side in saying that the business of Fiction is to Interest. Nothing in life that is interesting will therefore be alien to you as a writer of short-stories.

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TWENTY PROBLEMS OF THE FICTION WRITER

Problem 1

HOW TO MAKE A STORY INTERESTING

"There is no answer to Boredom"—from Katharine Fullerton Gerould's article on the American Short-Story in the *Yale Review* for July, 1924.

At the outset let us recognize one fact. It is that creative writing is no longer the work of tyros. It is a profession, followed diligently by men and women as a means of livelihood. Because it is a relatively high-paid profession, it attracts yearly more and more competent followers. Steadily the competition becomes keener, and steadily the number of failures grows. The distressing feature of the whole business is that so often the line between acceptance and rejection is very slight. More frequently than their writers realize, stories are "almost good enough," needing only slight changes to make them acceptable. Slight though these changes seem, they are nevertheless essential. It was Michael Angelo who said "Trifles make perfection; and perfection is no trifle." Paraphrasing that, the aspiring short-story writer might well say to himself: "trifles cause rejection; and rejection is no trifle." It is the recognition of these "trifles" which characterizes the *competent* literary craftsman. Between the established writer and the *beginner* the only real difference is competence in workmanship: their material is the same, they differ chiefly in the quality of their craftsmanship.

In two respects you may judge the craftsmanship of a short-

story writer. The first is his mastery of structure; and is the measure of an author's capacity for Plotting. It implies an ability to observe, recognize, classify, and arrange his material. The second is his ability to present that material artistically. This second quality of craftsmanship includes the ability to blend the material of a story so that that reader is unconscious of the mechanism and is aware only of the effect. It is "the art which conceals art," and comes from knowledge of the resources of language: it is English Composition applied to the special requirements of the Modern Short-Story. These two abilities in a writer (Plotting and Presentation) should be developed side by side. Both can be developed, like all capacity, by practice. To say that one of these capacities is more important that the other would be as absurd as to say that for transportation purposes the vehicle is more important than is motive power; transportation cannot exist without both; so likewise a story cannot exist without both Plotting and Presentation. But Plot exists *prior* to Presentation. That is the only reason that I ask you to consider Plotting before taking up Presentation.

The first and most important thing for the writer of short-stories to keep in mind is that the short-story is a modern form as far removed from Poe's "tale" as the great S.S. *Leviathan* is from Fulton's first steamboat. It is not concerned with creating a single emotional effect; neither is it any story which is merely short. If shortness were the sole criterion, a chapter from a novel would be a short-story. The short-story writer's task is allied less closely to that of the novelist than to that of the dramatist. From the dramatist the short-story writer may learn one useful lesson.

The dramatist selects all the happenings for eventual Presentation in Meetings between two people. During these meetings there is an interchange of conversation. During such interchange, one of these people is an Actor and the other is a Stimulus to his actions. If a writer will once grasp this technical distinction, he will achieve a unity in his stories which will go far to keep the reader's interest at a high pitch.

Through the responses of the actor to the stimulus the *character* of the actor is shown. This is so in all sorts of fiction writing. The purpose of all creative writers, whether novelists, dramatists, or short-story writers, is the same: *to show character* through the reactions of the actors to the various stimuli of life.

It may be said, then, that the writer *presents* his actors in a series of meetings and interchanges. These meetings or interchanges may be classified as *Presentation Units.* This knowledge will permit you to amend your definition of a Modern Short-Story to read thus: A story is one person's account of things that have happened to him or to someone else, *presented in a series of meetings or interchanges.*

The mere rendering of a number of Presentation Units will not constitute a plot. A plot is made up of Crises or Turning-points. The interest which is aroused in the reader from the Plot of a story may be, and frequently is, quite distinct from the interest which is aroused in a reader from the Presentation Units. Yet they are often combined and interwoven to such an extent that the reader cannot distinguish between the interest of the Plot and the interest of the Presentation Units. In general it is safe to say that from the writer's point of view, the material he deals with can be classified technically as Presentation Units which will be combined by him with Plot Crises in such a way as to make the two alternate.

Thus the story pattern finally emerges as a series of blocks, which are Presentation units, as indicated on page 17 of the Case Book. But within these blocks there is a further subdivision, which is fundamental.

1. Stimulus. (Most often another person.)
2. Actor.
3. Actor's response, characterizing the actor.

When we come to a discussion of the Scene as the unit, we shall see that in the ideally developed Presentation Unit, the interchange is the result of an actor with an immediate

purpose encountering and clashing with another actor or force opposed to that immediate purpose. Thus in every scene the actor has a definite and immediate purpose, quite distinct from the actor's purpose in the main story. For that reason a scene or other Presentation unit may stand upon its own feet in respect to arousing the reader's interest.

On the other hand the interest which the reader feels in the Presentation unit will be enhanced as soon as he is aware that it has a bearing upon the plot of the Main Story, and realizes that because of what has happened in this scene or Presentation Unit there is a Crisis or Turning-point in the Story. The writer who is determined to arouse and hold the reader's interest will therefore select for his story such Presentation Units as will lead into Plot Crises in the Main Story.

Plotting therefore deals equally with the Presentation Units and the Story Crises. It consists of selecting happenings and arranging them into an outline or pattern for a story. *Presentation* consists of filling in the details of this outline so plausibly as to give the reader the illusion of reality, and so interestingly as to capture the reader's interest and to hold it throughout the story.

Certain fundamentals in regard to the plotting or structure of the short-story you will by now be familiar with from your collateral reading in the Case Book. A short-story must have a Beginning, an Ending and a Body. The function of the Beginning is to set forth the story narrative problem confronting the chief actor, and such explanatory matter of setting, characterization, and prior happenings as may be necessary to lend plausibility and interest to that story narrative problem.

The Ending is concerned with showing the conclusive act by which the chief actor (or some force or forces set in motion by the chief actor) solves the narrative problem set forth in the Beginning.

The Body of the story is the *story-proper*. It shows the chief actor in a series of Meetings or interchanges, attempting to solve the main narrative problem.

The structural limitations of a story are, therefore, very

simple. To adhere to these simple structural limitations is not a difficult requirement. The beginner and the established writer alike recognize them.

What you, as students of the short-story form, would like to know is why the work of one writer is accepted and the work of the other is rejected, when the two writers deal with material essentially the same. Sometimes this sameness in material goes so far as to embrace essentially the very same narrative problem in the Beginning, almost identical struggles in the Body, and very similar solutions of the same problems in the Ending. The reason for rejection lies in some lack in either the Story, which we classify as Plotting, or in the Scenes, which we classify as Presentation.

Since the accepted story and the rejected story could have been condensed to outlines which would have been remarkable for their resemblances, the reason for rejection could not therefore be because of faults in the Plotting. The reason for rejection must lie, then, in the Presentation. A reading of the Cases Nos. 7, 8, 9, and 10 in the Case Book, with their accompanying analyses, will show you how much *arrangement* counts in capturing a reader's interest.

The same happenings may be selected by two writers; but their *arrangement,* particularly in that portion of the story which we classify structurally as the Beginning, will cause one writer's story to be so *interesting* that it will be accepted, while the second writer's story will be rejected because it is *dull.*

More often than this, however, the reason for rejection is that the second writer *selected* the same happenings; but in *developing* them, in a series of Stimuli and Responses, his Presentation was ineffective, because it left the outline or skeleton too obvious to the reader, who had no sense of illusion. This is the greatest fault in Presentation. In most stories which are rejected the writers are too anxious to make the Story clear to the reader before establishing the *illusion of reality* through well-selected Presentation Units. On the other hand, when a story is rejected for lacks in the Plot, the writer

has permitted himself to render Presentation Units, with *no alternation* of Story or Plot Crises. A writer who will keep in mind this necessity for alternation of Presentation Units and Story Crises *can make any set of happenings interesting.* Interest is the first requirement. It is a requirement dependent more often upon presentation than upon plot.

The comment most frequently made by publishers readers upon manuscripts which are "almost good enough" is "too slight—not enough story-interest." A story which is poor in all other respects will often be accepted because, despite its manifold faults, it possesses dramatic interest. Yet dramatic interest is not a matter of plot so much as of Presentation. A person taking up two stories whose plots in selection and arrangement of happenings are about the same, will be held by one because it has this quality of dramatic interest—which is compounded of plot interest and presentation interest—and bored by the other. There are different kinds of interest which every good writer should be aware of; yet day after day readers in editorial offices receive thousands of manuscripts which never ought to have been sent, and never would have been sent had the writers been cognizant of the devices and methods which are fundamental in creating interest. Fortunately, these devices are easily recognized: they are the writer's use of the Laws of Interest.

Interest, according to the dictionary, is *sustained attention.* To compel this sustained attention on the part of the reader is the task which confronts every writer who sets pen to paper. It is the reader who, seeing on the cover of a magazine the name of a certain writer, buys the magazine. It is the reader who writes to the editor, saying that he enjoyed a certain story; or, on the contrary, that he found a certain story dull. As Mrs. Gerould says, "There is no answer to boredom." The reader is, after all, the final judge. But it is axiomatic that you cannot *sustain* a reader's attention without first *capturing* it. To capture his interest and then to hold it is your never-ending task as a writer of the short-story. You see, you have two problems in regard to interest:

to capture and to hold. To capture the reader's interest you must excite his curiosity; and curiosity is a single impulse to know more about something. This involves his attention; but as soon as he knows what he wishes to regarding whatever has excited his curiosity his attention flags.

Before this point is reached, you must excite another kind of attention, a kind which does not so easily flag: sustained attention. When the appeal to his attention is based solely upon curiosity, his unexpressed interrogation is "What is it all about?" On the other hand, with sustained attention there is present the added element of expectancy, which causes him to ask himself, "What will happen next?" and essentially and fundamentally, "Now what will this actor do when he encounters *that* stimulus?" With sustained attention there is present curiosity plus expectancy, which is what we commonly call Suspense.

Let us consider for a moment how you may use these two kinds of interest in the structural divisions of your story. These structural divisions are the Beginning, the Body, and the Ending.

The devices designed primarily to capture interest are those which you will have to use in the Beginning of your story. By the Beginning is meant not the first few paragraphs merely, but sometimes as large a proportion as one-half or two-thirds of the whole story. The Beginning consists of two subdivisions: One of these is the Situation, or narrative problem, through which the reader is made aware that the chief actor is confronted by a problem demanding for its solution, action on his part.

The other subdivision of the Beginning is the part which causes writers the most difficulty, because of failure to understand, completely, its function. It consists of the explanatory matter necessary to capture the reader's interest *by making the Story Situation or Problem both interesting and plausible to the reader.*

The function of this Explanatory Portion of the Beginning is to set forth the Condition or State of Affairs which pre-

cipitates the problem. In some stories the Main or Story Problem is so interesting, in itself that without explanatory matter, it can be presented at once, and be depended upon to capture the reader's interest. It is then said to be an *Intrinsically* interesting Story Situation.

In most stories, however, the Main or Story Problem becomes interesting only after its importance has been built up for the reader by the Explanatory Matter: the Condition or State of Affairs which confronts the chief actor. It is then said to be a *Synthetically* interesting Story Situation.

Even in the case of the *Intrinsically* interesting Story Problem, Explanatory Matter (the Condition), although delayed in its introduction, must be included. It is essential to make everything clear to the reader. That is for Plausibility. It is also necessary to set forth this Condition facing the chief actor in order that the reader may feel that his interest had been roused justifiably. For clarification, you may wish to set before your reader certain biographical details which will help him to understand the actors; you may wish to impress upon him some special quality in the background or atmosphere; or you may feel—and this is by far the leading reason—that for a full comprehension of the importance, or difficulty, or urgency of the Problem confronting the chief actor, the reader should be made aware of certain prior happenings, and especially of the likelihood of failure and of the probability of opposition.

In Plotting the Beginning, therefore, you will keep in mind its two sub-divisions.

1. The Main Narrative Problem or Story Situation, which is interesting either intrinsically or synthetically.

2. The Explanatory Matter, making the reader aware of the Condition Precipitating the Story Problem.

It is safe to assume that if a reader is sufficiently interested to read through to the Body of your story, he will continue to read. Your chief problem, then, is to capture his interest at once. This you will do by appealing to his *curiosity*, pending the moment that you can count on his *sustained interest*

in the Meetings or Interchanges that make up the Body of the story-proper.

Particularly is this true in the case of the Synthetically Interesting story, when the Condition must be set forth before the Story Situation can be presented. In this kind of story—and the great majority of stories fall into this category—everything depends upon the interest of the Presentation Units. Only after the reader has read the Presentation Units does he become aware of the importance of the Main Story Situation or Problem.

This demand for interest you must keep in mind throughout your story, from the opening sentence to the closing word; but particularly in the explanatory Matter of the Beginning. It is this Explanatory Matter which is most often depended upon to catch the reader's interest. It is the Beginning of the story which, capturing the reader's attention, most often determines for him—and this includes the professional "reader" in the editor's office—whether or not he will continue to read the story.

Now the ultimate Beginning of any story, that part which comes at once to the reader's attention, is the title. From the point of view of interest, a good title is, then, your first consideration in arousing the reader's interest. The title should be arresting, suggestive, challenging. Kipling's "Without Benefit of Clergy" has all of these requirements. So has Barrie's "What Every Woman Knows." So has Henry James's "The Turn of the Screw." So has O. Henry's "The Badge of Policeman O'Roon." So has John Marquand's "A Thousand in the Bank." Octavus Roy Cohen is particularly apt in this respect. The moving picture producers know the value of an interest-compelling title; in fact, they carry the question of title to excess—into the realms of questionable taste. But their titles do *arouse interest.* And for the moment you are concerned only with *interest.* You may say definitely that the first device for capturing interest is in the *selection of a title* which will cause the reader to pause, which will whet his *curiosity.*

This desire to excite the reader's curiosity will guide you always in selecting and arranging the materials that go into the Beginning of your story, that portion setting forth the story Problem and its involvements. No matter what sort of story you propose to write, regardless of your stage of progress in fiction-writing, your materials will always be the same: Stimuli, Actors, and Character Response forming a narrative pattern.

Yet you may use all of these materials in the Beginning of your story without exciting the reader's interest. The arrangement may be wrong. The reader "doesn't know what you're driving at." So you see, the materials cannot be arranged indiscriminately.

In order that the reader may find the Beginning of a story interesting, these materials must be arranged in such a way that the reader is aware that a character is facing a grave crisis in his career, is confronted by a problem demanding action on his part, or is in a dilemma from which he must extricate himself, or is in a position which makes it necessary for him to choose between courses of conduct.

There is always a narrative problem when there is *something to be accomplished,* or *some decision to be made*. Unless one of these elements of *Purpose or Indecision* is present there is *no narrative problem.* This is a fundamental requirement in the Beginning of any and every story. That is what makes it a story.

However, if you will read over the section of the Case Book, devoted to Nomenclature you will see that in the completely developed Scene, this same element occurs. A narrative problem is a fundamental requirement of a scene as it is of a complete story. A scene has all the elements, in miniature, of a complete story. Usually they are, in scenes, problems of *purpose.* So that we may say then that there are *scene purposes* and a Story Purpose. EITHER MAY BE USED TO CAPTURE A READER'S INTEREST.

While the title is the first device by which you attempt to arouse the reader's interest, you will ensure a let-down of this

interest unless you make him aware, within the first few hundred words, approximately, of a Purpose. Ordinarily, this Purpose will be a Scene-Purpose, and it will be one of the five Scene-Purposes set forth on page 25 of the Case Book. Their appearance will cause the reader to ask himself a question: "Can A succeed in getting information from B.?" etc.

Just as a hostess gives the guest soup, or an hors d'œuvre to stimulate his appetite for the main dish, you furnish this scene to prepare the reader for the Main Story. You may have to provide him with more than one scene before you feel that he is ready for the Main Story Situation. But your fundamental task, in capturing your reader's interest is to make him aware, at the earliest possible moment, consistent with plausibility, of a Main or Story Situation, quite apart from the scene purposes, which will thereafter condition the actor's responses. This you will succeed in doing when you make the reader aware that *the chief actor is called upon to Accomplish something or to make a Decision.*

But at this point you will find yourselves puzzled by the fact that among the material which you have available, while there are plenty of happenings which show that there is *something to be accomplished or decided,* you do not find that something of sufficiently compelling interest to lead you to appraise it as a possible Main or Story Situation. And here a great and fundamental truth in regard to the Laws of Interest begins to dawn. Let me illustrate: If you are sitting by the shore of a quiet lagoon while a dog is swimming lazily from shore to shore you may be trying to cause the dog to fetch a stick. Although in your attempt to direct the dog there is something to be accomplished, you are only mildly interested. But if, instead of a quiet lagoon, there are wind-swept breakers hurling themselves against a precipitous cliff, and the dog instead of swimming lazily, is so exhausted that his attempts to reach the place you indicate seem difficult of accomplishment, your interest grows. Your interest will be increased if the dog is your dog and a valuable animal that has won many money prizes at dog shows. Further, if you

have agreed to forfeit a large sum of money should the dog not be on hand at a certain hour, now very near, for another show, you will be still more interested. And if, instead of sitting quietly, you are pinned under an overturned automobile, your interest is intense. But it will be still more intense if you are trying to cause the dog to swim to the assistance of a small five year old boy, equally exhausted, and that boy is your son whom you love devotedly.

In the first instance you found yourselves mildly interested, in the second intensely interested. In analyzing the reasons for the differing intensity of your interest you will discover that in the second instance *more depended upon what happened.* And that is the great fundamental secret of interest—*Importance. A Situation involving purpose or choice is interesting in proportion to what depends upon it.* The more important the accomplishment the greater is the promise of Disaster in case of failure. The more that depends upon the decision or choice to be made, the greater is the promise of Disaster if the wrong decision is made. And any Situation, to a person of imagination, has potential fiction importance, because much may be made to depend upon it. When you fully comprehend and can supply this Law of Interest you hold the key to plotting.

Your third method of capturing interest, therefore, lies in making sure that the situation is Imporant, either Intrinsically in itself, or Synthetically, because of what depends upon it. In Will Payne's story "Paradise Island" (see Case No. 7 in the Case Book) the situation (the thing to be accomplished) is Important in itself; a man sets out to kill another man: all the explanatory matter or the involvement making up the rest of the Beginning gains a borrowed importance from it. In Frank R. Adams's story "Spare Parts" (see Case No. 3 in the Case Book) on the other hand, the situation (the thing to be accomplished) is unimportant; a man sets out to drive an automobile from Los Angeles to St. Louis. In exact contrast to Paradise Island, the explanatory matter, or the involvements, making up the rest of the Beginning, lend an

importance to the Story situation. One is an Intrinsically important Story situation. The other is a Synthetically important Story situation.

In the Intrinsically important Story situation, the main situation being interesting in itself gives plot interest at once to the story, and can be presented before the explanatory matter. In the synthetically interesting Story situation no such gain of plot interest would result if the main situation were presented before the explanatory matter, because the plot interest is not apparent until after the reader becomes aware, through reading the explanatory matter, of the involvements which give importance to the main situation.

In your search for Story situations which are interesting you will be helped by what journalists call "a nose for news." As your purpose is to arouse curiosity, you will do well to inquire as to what things people are curious about. Everyone remembers how, in the first years of the great war, Americans read avidly all that they could about the World War. Then there was a slump; curiosity was sated. It had ceased to be "news" temporarily. Now that a new and more "human" aspect of the conflict is being dealt with, the war is again "news." Almost everybody is familiar with the story of the veteran newspaperman who explained to the cub reporter: "If a dog bites a man, it isn't news; but *it is news* if the man bites the dog." Only recently a man whose business in life is editing the news summed up news values very cleverly. He said:

1 ordinary man + 1 ordinary life = 0
1 ordinary man + 1 ordinary wife = 0
1 ordinary man + 1 auto + 1 gun + 1 quart = News
1 bank cashier + 1 wife + 7 children = 0
1 bank cashier — $100,000 + 1 chorus girl = Head-lines.

The explanation, of course, is that the things which have no news value are the things which are usual; those which have news value are those things which are unusual. So you come to another method of stimulating or creating interest—*the*

Unusual. This quality of being unusual may be in the Story situation (the thing to be accomplished or decided) or it may be in the status of the character who is confronted by the situation. In "The Face in the Window" by William Dudley Pelley, (Case No. 9 in the Case Book), although the situation is unusual (a woman sets out to capture a dangerous, escaped murderer), in the status of the woman there is nothing unusual. She is an ordinary New England villager. But ordinarily, New England village women do not spend their time in such a pursuit. On the other hand, in "Western Stuff" by Mary Brecht Pulver, (Case No. 10 in the Case Book) the story situation (the thing to be accomplished) is usual enough (a woman finding that another woman is monopolizing her husband's attention, sets out to regain him). The status of the character, however, is unusual. She is the queen of the rodeo riders, a type of person one does not meet very often. In selecting as material unusual situations for main or story narrative problems your test will be the very simple test of asking yourself if, out of a hundred people you know, how many have to meet that problem. In selecting unusual types, you will make a similar test. Out of a hundred people you meet on the street, how many are that special type.

It is in this interest in the unusual that you find the explanation of the great vogue of the "local color" story in America. People are interested in certain places, places in which they have been, or places in which they would like to be. Certain regions and certain places are symbolic. Most Americans are interested in New York City. A few years ago the majority of stories had their setting in New York. It was the mecca of many people who had been there or were hoping to go there. People read about places with which they would like to be familiar. Men sweltering in cities like to read stories of the Maine woods, of the Rockies, of the "great open spaces where men are men and women are mates." Out of twenty stories read, which I selected at random recently from current magazines, *fifteen* had settings in foreign countries; only two were laid in New York; *one* in a small college town in

New England; *one* in Hollywood; and *one* was laid on a Western ranch. New York is no longer in the lead. Thus it goes. One after another, certain regions are discovered, are exploited, have their vogue, and fade out, to give place to some more interesting region. After a while they cease to be interesting because they cease to be unusual; they have become usual, the glamour is off them; familiarity has bred contempt. What applies to places in this respect applies also to the people in the stories. A writer finds certain kinds of people interesting; on paper he makes them live. Kipling wrote about the Anglo-Indian; O. Henry wrote about New York shop-girls; Ben Ames Williams writes about New England countrymen; Octavus Roy Cohen writes about the negroes of Alabama; H. C. Witwer writes about prize-fighters. The public is tremendously interested; other writers less original and less competent, noting the success of the first, try unsuccessfully to portray the same kind of people; soon there is such a succession of them that the reading public tires of them; they cease to be people and become types; the pages of the poorer fiction magazines are full of them; the moving pictures particularly swarm with them. Beginning as individuals, they prove on examination to possess little individuality; they have ceased to be unusual.

Many writers producing stories about unusual people against unusual backgrounds are amazed to have those stories rejected. If they understood the Laws of Interest, the reason would be clear. Setting and people have of themselves no narrative or plot interest. Setting and people are stimuli. A plot is responses *arranged as crises.* But the amateur writer will continue to write standardized background stories. They run to types. In the United States this standardization has reached a point where there is a public for particular kinds of plots—the Western story, the Sea story, the War story, the College story.

The significant thing about this division into types of backgrounds is not so much that there is a public for each type as that there is a large public who never read certain type stories,

because those stories, depending for their interest upon their background, are more or less stereotyped as to plot and have ceased to be interesting. In many cases readers await eagerly the appearance of a certain type of story, continue to read that type for a year or so, weary of it; and turn from it in search of some other type. To those readers, the first type has ceased to be *unusual.*

It would appear from all this that it is an axiom that the device to capture interest is the *unusual.* Yet you will remember that I told you that five out of the twenty stories which I examined achieved their interest while dealing with the usual American background. Actually there was something *unusual* either in the actors or in the happenings.

Still, you find competent artists like Edna Ferber, who write extremely interesting stories apparently about usual people in usual surroundings doing the most usual things. In such cases you will discover that the artist has thrown new light on an old subject. Interest is achieved by unusual interpretation of a usual phenomenon, or the unusual adaptation of a usual incident. And so you come to your fifth device for capturing interest—the apparently usual is conceived as unusual. It is not a question of phrasing, it is a question of originality of conception.

In a story by Edna Ferber which appeared in the *Red Book* a few years ago there is an example of this. A New York shop-girl comes out of her dingy home looking marvelously attractive. That was the material Edna Ferber had to work with; but her imagination conceived the comparison of the dainty girl and her dingy surroundings with a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis.

In Irvin Cobb's story, "We of the Old South," which appeared in the *Cosmopolitan* for November, 1924, the material he had to work with was a girl who had borrowed her name one place, her accent another, etc. Cobb's imagination took this out of the commonplace and made it unusual by likening her, in the vernacular of men who deal in motors, to an "assembled product."

Comparison and Imagery are qualities of the Imagination. It is the Imagination which enables the writer to recognize the *unusual,* particularly when it is not obviously apparent. By this ability, which will help you to add a great deal of interest to the part of every story which is normally the dullest part,—the explanatory matter of the main situation,—your rank as a creative artist will be judged. To be a writer you must be at once a psychologist and an advertising expert. You must understand the value of different appeals. Kipling created an India that no one knew existed. But he got his interest not so much by the unusual that was India, as by the unusual that was the Englishman in India or the Irishman in India—by a juxtaposition of the known against the unknown—*by contrast.* You all know that on a black velvet gown a string of pearls will show up better than against a background of their own color. A *contrast* or a juxtaposition of opposites, then, is your sixth method of achieving interest. This *contrast* may be between the main actor and the setting.

In *Collier's* for February 6, 1926, May Edgington in "Purple and Fine Linen" made use of this kind of contrast when she showed a woman begging in a district of London sacred to old and dignified clubs. This contrast may also be between the main actor and another actor with a prominent rôle. Irvin Cobb in "We of the Old South," made use of this kind of contrast by throwing together a typical, simple, ingenuous, kindly, old Southern Colonel and an equally typical chorus girl. Almost automatically in this juxtaposition of an actor and an unfamiliar background, or of an unusual type person against the usual type person, or of the unusual type and the usual problem, or the usual type and the unusual problem you come to your seventh method of capturing interest—the foreshadowing of conflict, of difficulty to be overcome, of disaster to the cause.

It is important at this point that you do not confuse the two different kinds of interest, presentation interest and plot interest. The interest aroused by the title; the interest aroused by the juxtaposition of opposites; the interest aroused by

imagery; the interest aroused by the unusual conditions and unusual characters, and even the interest which comes from the promise of difficulty, conflicts or disaster are all subsidiary to and dependent upon story or plot interest. Plot interest is concerned with making the reader aware of the importance of narrative turning points or crises. The other types of interest are utilized to keep the reader from being bored, while he is being given the information which contributes to the unusualness or importance of those narrative turning points or crises, of which the essential one is the main crisis or the main Story situation. For I cannot too often reiterate that without an important situation (something important, either intrinsically or synthetically, to be accomplished or decided) there can be no story. Equally, without a story there can be no story or plot interest. All other interest is presentation interest.

The comment of the editorial reader upon the "almost accepted" story, you will remember, was "not enough story-interest." Real "story-interest" does not come until the Body of the story when the reader is aware of the Story Situation, and the conflict begins. Not until conflict is shown in the form of an encounter can there be sustained "story-interest." But in the Beginning, while you excite the curiosity of the reader in regard to the outcome of the main situation (the main thing to be accomplished or decided), you also entice him to continue interested by holding out to him the *promise of conflict, difficulty, or disaster.* This is plot interest, and distinct from his interest in the scenes themselves. You have, therefore, you see, counting the title, seven ways of capturing the interest of your reader in the Beginning of your story and one of these (the seventh—the foreshadowing of difficulty, conflict, or disaster) contains in addition to curiosity, the quality of expectancy, which makes your story dramatic.

1. A title which is arresting, suggestive (in the better sense) and challenging.

2. A Story situation (something to be accomplished or decided).

3. Importance of the situation or its involvements, made clear in Scene or Scenes.

4. The inclusion of something unusual in the Story situation or in the chief character.

5. Original conception or interpretation so that *the apparently usual is made unusual.*

6. A contrast or juxtaposition of opposites.

7. The foreshadowing of difficulty, conflict, or disaster, to carry interest over to the body of the story.

Up to this point I have concentrated upon indicating to you the possibilities of arousing or capturing interest. From now on I shall ask you to abandon the consideration of that kind of interest which is *curiosity,* for the consideration of that kind of interest which is *sustained attention.* I shall ask you to turn from that portion of the story which is technically classified as the Beginning, to that portion of the story which is technically classified as the Body. The Beginning, you must remember, does not mean always merely the first few paragraphs: it includes that portion of the story which sets forth the Main situation confronting the chief character and such explanatory matter of setting, characterization, or prior happening as are necessary to give plausibility and interest to that situation. This main situation may precede the explanatory matter or it may follow the explanatory. A good Story situation, judged in regard to interest, is one growing out of a great crisis in the life of the main character, with much depending upon the outcome, and which demands instant action from the character. It is interesting in proportion as it is important or unusual. Its primary function is to show that something is to be accomplished or decided by the main character, involving the probability of difficulty or disaster, and primarily of conflict with some opposing force or forces.

Once the reader's interest has been aroused by the prospect of conflict you will be unwise to delay the appearance of the opposing forces. At the earliest moment consistent with plausibility you will arrange a meeting between your main actor and one of these forces. And keeping in mind the

necessity for plot interest, you will arrange that the outcome of this meeting will form a new crisis by confronting the hero with a new situation; with the necessity for trying again to bring about a solution of the narrative-problem, so that the reader is made aware that until this new situation is disposed of, the outcome of the main situation is still in doubt. This new crisis or turning point in the Body of your story will hold for the reader an importance borrowed from the original Story Problem presented in the Beginning of your story.

Whenever the editorial reader says "not enough story-interest" he means one of two things: that the story lacks a sufficient number of such crises to keep the reader in suspense as to the outcome of the story, or that the meetings which intervene between the crisis are not sufficiently interesting in themselves to hold the reader's sustained attention until a new crisis is reached. In the first case, the lack is in your plotting; in the selection and arrangement of your happenings, so that the reader is aware of crisis. In the second case the lack is in your presentation, which usually means that you have not enough clash in the meetings which you select. This is what the average man or woman means when he says "I didn't like that story because 'nothing happens.'" Most stories which are rejected have this basic fault. They do not have enough encounters; and the reader is, therefore, unaware of any sense of clash of opposing forces. Or they do not keep the reader in suspense by making him feel that success is unlikely. With the encounters under way you have story-interest. In the well constructed story these encounters will be the outgrowth of the main or story situation.

In presenting the meetings or interchanges which make up the Beginning you achieve story interest by making the reader aware of the main or story situation and showing the prospect of conflict. In presenting the meetings or interchanges which make up the Body of your story, you will be concerned with showing the reader that conflict in a series of encounters. Throughout the presentation units which make up the Body of

your story, the reader sees that the actor is engaged in an encounter or in a series of encounters as a result of his attempt to solve a Story Problem *of which the outcome is in doubt.* The inclusion of this conflict *or clash of opposing forces* is, then, the eighth method of creating interest. It is the *chief* method of holding interest. Yet, no matter how vividly you can present these meetings and interchanges of opposing forces, you may still receive rejection slips if your plot sense is so poor that you fail to indicate to the reader that the result of every such meeting or encounter is a *crisis in the central attempt* of the main character to solve the problems raised by the main situation, such crises or turning points forming new situations which still leave the ultimate outcome in doubt.

Then each conflict is made interesting by expectancy, by a desire on the part of the reader to know what is to happen next. Thus story-interest can be aroused by either crises or meetings, but preferably by both, because story interest comes from suspense, which may be in relation to the outcome of the actor's immediate purpose in a single meeting or to the outcome of the Main situation of the story as a whole. Always, however, in the Body of your story the Kind of interest which you seek to excite is the interest of *sustained* attention or what is commonly known as "suspense."

As soon as you leave that portion of your story which is classified as the Body, and begin the consideration of that portion which is classified as the Ending, a third type of interest appears. In the Beginning of your story you arouse the reader's interest by hinting of encounters to come; the interest is chiefly the Interest of Curiosity. In the Body of your story you postpone gratifying the curiosity which the Beginning arouses, by keeping the reader in doubt as to the ultimate outcome of those encounters; the interest is the Interest of Suspense. But when the curiosity is gratified, and the suspense over, there remains the task of making the reader feel repaid for the time he has given to the reading of your story. He must be left with a feeling that his curiosity was justified by what eventuated, and that the end was worth

waiting for. He must be left with a sense of satisfaction regarding the outcome, a feeling that given the actors and the circumstances the only ultimate result of the encounters is the result you have shown. The Ending need not necessarily be the conventional "happy" ending. It is required only that it seem inevitable. The interest in the Ending of your story is the Interest of Satisfaction.

In achieving this third type of interest, there are two devices used especially. Of one of these O. Henry was the great modern exponent. He is remarkable for the adroit twist which he gives to his plots; so much so, in fact, that he is today remembered chiefly because of that, whereas his real claim to distinction rests upon no such flimsy foundation. He had a great eye for contemporary types. But before he portrayed them they were not types. Nevertheless, he is now cited chiefly because of his extraordinary mastery of one of these devices—the use of the unexpected. The Reversal of the original situation confronting the main character has always been a favorite method of causing in the mind of the reader the sense of satisfaction as to the outcome. It is made dramatic by surprise. Henry Fielding, whom we commonly regard as one of the originators of the English novel, phrased this Law of Interest very neatly, thus:

". . . . within these few restrictions, I think, every writer may be permitted to deal as much in the wonderful as he pleases; nay, if he then keeps within the rules of credibility, the more he can *surprise* the reader, the more he will engage his attention, and the more he will charm him."

O. Henry's story, "The Cop and the Anthem" (Case No. 2 in the Case Book) is a typical example of the use of the unexpected by the reversal of the situation. The tramp who sets out to be arrested, is arrested after he has changed his mind; after all the ordinary causes for arrest have failed to land him in jail, he is arrested for listening to church music.

The next device upon which I have not touched is one which, although extremely effective, is not employed nearly

as much as it might be. You have seen that an incident of no intrinsic interest can be given a synthetic or built-up interest through combination with other incidents. But a synthetic interest may be given to an incident or happening by its meaning. An incident meaningless and undramatic in itself may become very meaningful and striking in proportion as it is significant or *symbolic*. Wilbur Daniel Steele, in a story called "When Hell Froze," causes a woman to plunge her hands into a pan of lye to *symbolize* her admission of infidelity to her husband. In "The Sign of the Lamp" Thomas Burke causes one of the characters to pull down a window shade, an act insignificant in itself, but rendered *significant* because it is a signal to the police that a certain fugitive is hiding in the room. In the Beginning of a *Saturday Evening Post* Story a girl jokingly tells her step-father that she is proof against emotional disturbances and that if she ever does fall in love she will consider it a sufficiently important occasion to send her step-father a telegram. At the close of the story she says "I must send a cable to Cyril." When ordinarily a man says, in reply to an invitation to drink: Thank you, I don't drink, it is not especially interesting; but when it signifies a definite result of a struggle against dissipation it becomes significant. There is a striking example of this in the closing sentence of the story "Sunk" by George F. Worts (Case No. 6 in the Case Book.) This tenth device for achieving interest is the inclusion of the *symbolic* or *significant act*.

The twelfth and last of the devices for sustaining interest is the one which is usually the result of practice. You know that frequently you read, and find interesting, a story whose plot is by no means strikingly original; you will read again and again a type of story in which the same characters appear; you will even look forward to stories in which the people and the happenings are deliberately distorted. You enjoy these stories because of the author's gift for language. There is something original or charming in the phrasing. It is, as

Pope puts it, "What oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed." This originality or charm of phrasing may run throughout the story. It may be used while you are exciting Curiosity, or Suspense, or Satisfaction. This method of achieving interest is not to be confused with the third method, the unusual interpretation of usual phenomena, which comes before phrasing and is in no way dependent upon phrasing. Interpretation is a part of Plotting; phrasing is a part of Presentation.

In applying these Laws of Interest to your work, you will, of course be careful not to attempt too arbitrary a distinction as to the scope of the different Kinds of Interest. While it must be apparent that a certain kind of interest belongs primarily to the Beginning or the Ending or the Body of your story, it must be equally apparent that it cannot be confined to that portion alone. For example, although the use of the unexpected outcome is ordinarily employed in the Ending of a Story to show the ironic reversal of the Story Situation set forth in the Beginning of the Story, you may make use of this quality of unexpectedness in the ending of a Scene. In that case it will form a crisis in the Story Pattern or Plot, and may occur at any point in the progress of the Story—in the Beginning or in the Body. It may come *at the conclusion of any meeting* at any point in the Story. It may even occur *during a meeting.*

At the conclusion of this discussion I have prepared, for your information a diagram. It will help you to understand the main divisions into which a story falls. I have represented each of these main divisions as a block, and within each block is a statement setting forth the *functional* purposes of that particular division. On the left of each such division is a list of the devices normally employed by the writer to enlist and hold the reader's interest.

This diagram is intended to be used by you as a standard of specification against which you may check a story you write. You will be helped vastly by reading stories in current magazines, in an endeavor to see by what devices the

writers succeed in enlisting and holding interest. Compare this diagram with the Architectural Norm Chart on page 17 of the Case Book.

You will be very much interested to discover that your stories may be made interesting by the employment of the devices indicated. You will also learn a great deal by attempting to determine, in reading other people's stories, the exact point at which you become seized with a desire to skip. You will discover, usually, that you will read a Scene between two people without loss of interest; but that your interest will drop, if, at the conclusion of the Scene there is no indication of a crisis in the Plot. You will see for yourself, in this way, that a Scene in a story becomes interesting in proportion to what depends upon it. Realizing this analytically, your task is to put it into effect, *creatively*. Stories will not come to you ready-made. A condition may exist which is *unusual;* but it will not of itself, constitute a Story Situation. Your task is to select or *invent* Important Main or Story Situations. You will first have to vizualize it as Something to be Accomplished by an Actor, or as Something to be Decided (Some choice to be made) by an Actor. If the Story Problem so raised is not in itself interesting, *make it interesting* by making much depend upon it, by causing it to become important to the actor, and preferably make it both important and unusual. Once you grasp this essential, the road is clear ahead; until you grasp it, everything is chaos. IT IS NOT EASY.

Facility in invention comes only from practice. Many people never become good at plotting, in the sense that it is easy for them. Their chief reliance must be upon Presentation. But Presentation is not easy. It is so tiring that many people rebel against the labor it entails. That is not the time to abandon effort. Many people find their muscles complaining against physical exercise. Ordinarily, the more the muscles complain, the more you need that exercise. So it is with exercises of the imagination. The imagination, like everything else in nature, grows by what it feeds upon. Most of you will find the inventive side of Plotting difficult at first.

But that should not discourage you. Although, at first, problems of plotting appear appallingly difficult, they become increasingly easier. Keep your goal clearly in mind. The reader's interest must be captured and held. In attempting to do this, you are in competition with *thousands* of others. And the reader has ample choice. He won't read your story unless it interests him. If he is bored he'll stop reading. Remember "There is no answer to Boredom."

THE APPLICATION OF THE LAWS OF INTEREST TO THE DIFFERENT DIVISIONS OF THE MODERN SHORT-STORY

Devices		Type of Reader Interest Sought	
1. A Title.	Arresting, suggestive, challenging.		
2. A Situation. {Some feat to be Accomplished, or Some Course of Conduct to be chosen.}	Happenings presented to make clear to the reader that the Story Purpose (Accomplishment) or Story Problem, (Decision), calls upon the chief actor to engage at once in action.	Curiosity: A Single Desire to Know More About Anything.	The Beginning
3. Importance of Story Situation. Intrinsically or Synthetically through foreshadowing. 4. Difficulty, Conflict, Disaster. 5. Unusualness of Story Situation; of Actor's status. 6. Impressions by Contrast. 7. Impressions through unusual conception of the apparently usual, through comparison or imagery.	The Condition precipitating the Story Situation. Rendered in Presentation Units or in Author's Interpolations to make clear to the reader that the Accomplishment or Decision can come only when the chief actor has (a) Overcome Difficulty (b) Engaged in conflict with Opposed Forces. (c) Averted Disaster.		
8. Dramatic Interaction of Opposing Forces that clash about immediate purposes in Scenes. This clash brings about Plot crisis at the end of each scene.	A series of Presentation Units in which the character-traits of the different actors should emerge. The attempt to overcome a Difficulty. The attempt to overcome an Opposed Force, and The Attempt to Avert Disaster (all foreshadowed in the Beginning) are developed. Each such attempt causes a crisis or turning-point in the Story Plot.	Sustained Attention: Suspense As Regards the Outcome of Struggles.	The Body
9. The Unexpected. 10. The Symbolic Act.	Made up of Presentation Unit or Units showing the Conclusive Act of the Plot, by which the Main Actor (or some force acted upon by him) meets the Story Situation.	A Sense of Satisfaction in Regard to the Outcome of the Story.	The Ending
11. Significance.	Plus the significance, ironic or otherwise of the Conclusive Act. (Sometimes shown as a Sequel.)		

12. Permeating the Whole Story—originality or charm of phrasing or treatment.

Problem 2

DRAMA IN THE SHORT-STORY

THE SCENE AS THE UNIT

More and more, as you make a careful study of the modern short-story, you will become convinced that the ability to create an interesting and convincing illusion of actual life is the ability which is the mark of the highly competent craftsman. Certain Laws of Interest, as definite as the Laws of chemistry or physics, applied to your material will help you in the selection and arrangement of that material so that in presenting it you will create the illusion you wish—the illusion of actual people in actual places, reacting to stimuli in such a way that the traits or characteristics are made clear to the reader.

From a study of the Case Book you will have learned that there are four definite narrative turning points or crises in every story. One of these, the Story Situation, occurs in the Beginning; two, the Furtherances, and the Hindrances, occur in the Body; and the fourth, the conclusive act, occurs in the Ending of the story.

A glance at the chart accompanying the Lecture upon the Laws of Interest will show you that a Main or Story narrative situation (that is some feat to be accomplished or some choice to be made), even though intrinsically unimportant and uninteresting, can be made important and interesting by adding to it the promise of conflict with a difficulty; the promise of conflict with a dangerous opponent, and the promise of a conflict which will be necessary to avert disaster or defeat. When a Story situation is thus made important it contains the quality of being Dramatic. The hint or foreshadowing of

difficulty, of opposition, and particularly of disaster, makes any undertaking hazardous and, therefore, Dramatic. Obviously, then, if this hint of conflict is dramatic the conflict itself must be even more dramatic. Equally, if the Promise of Disaster or Defeat is Dramatic the appearance of that Disaster or Defeat itself is even more Dramatic.

It will be apparent that just as each of the narrative turning points falls naturally into one of the three great divisions of Beginning, Body and Ending, so do these qualities of Drama. The Promise of Conflict, with difficulties, with opponents, and with impending Disaster or Defeat lends drama to the Beginning; the conflict itself lends drama to the Body, and Disaster or Defeat lends drama to the Ending. It is obvious, of course, that in every conflict there must be two opposing forces, and that necessarily Disaster or Defeat for one implies the avoidance of Disaster, (success) for the other. Thus the Ending will be dramatic if it contains either Disaster or its avoidance.

You will now begin to see that in Plotting your stories you will have to include not only Narrative interest, but Dramatic interest. From what you will learn about Setting and Actor Images, you will see that you must include also Impressions of people, places, and things to achieve the illusion of reality. In addition to Impression there is the Emotion which is Feeling, and which comes from the readers awareness of an actor responding to a stimulus.

Summed up, then, you must cause the reader to feel emotion by showing the actor's responses in a narrative pattern of dramatic material which gives the impression of reality.

Impression will come from setting and actor images. Feeling will come from characterization. In observing and classifying material you will keep those categories in mind. Because you realize that with the short-story writer life is dynamic, you will accustom yourself to think of your material in terms of happenings.

If you see the sun rising over the Matterhorn, or if you hear a train whistling in the distance, or if the pungent odor of creosote smites your nostrils, if the breeze blows dust into your

eyes on land, or salt spray into your mouth at sea, these happenings you classify as happenings which *illustrate setting.* If you see a stylishly dressed, tall, graceful girl of twenty, with even features and curly hair, hurrying along the street, you have observed a happening which you will classify as an *image of an actor.* If you see a man kicking a crippled dog or twisting a woman's wrist, or rescuing another from drowning at the risk of his own life, or giving his last cent or his last bite of food to help a comrade in distress, you will classify these as happenings *illustrating character.*

Yet, on the other hand, you have not observed anything which, standing alone, contributes to that vitally necessary quality in a story which we call the Plot or the Narrative Pattern. It is important that you see this distinction clearly. A story gets its emotional value (its impression and its feeling) from Setting and from Characterization, but in its plot it deals only with narrative turning points or crises; a series of these crises properly arranged making a narrative pattern and giving it narrative or plot interest.

An important category, then, under which you must learn to classify the result of your observation is: *happenings which illustrate narrative turning-points or crises.*

Sometimes a happening may be made to contribute to both the emotional effect and the narrative effect. A happening which you may select as a happening illustrating setting, may perhaps also be a happening which forms a turning-point or crisis in the narrative pattern or plot. For example, a man by striking an enemy with an ax in a moment of passion illustrates his *character;* but this action may also be a *turning point in the plot.* The breaking up of the ice upon a river may illustrate *setting,* yet it also may be a *turning point or crisis in the story* of a person whose safety depends upon the stability of that ice. Herein lies the difference in attitude toward material between you, as a writer of fiction, and the writer of non-fiction. The writer of non-fiction is concerned with rendering setting and character. He sometimes is dramatic. So are you, but, while rendering setting and character you will render them

as much as possible in terms of narrative and dramatic crises.

You will train your observation, therefore, to extract, wherever possible, besides impression and emotion, the narrative and dramatic value from closely linked happenings. In your presentation of your story you will always keep this in mind, and you will, whenever any element is lacking, make the additions necessary to bring about this result. As there can be no story interest until there is a narrative pattern, you will be especially receptive and perceptive toward those happenings which can be classified as contributing to the plot: as being turning points or crises having narrative quality.

As soon as you begin to think of your happenings in terms of narrative crisis you have swung out of the first phase, which is the observation of material. And as soon as you have reached the point of classification, you have begun to plot. Plotting includes, in addition to the selection and classification of material, the arrangement of the selected material into a pattern. But this arrangement comes as a result of selection and rejection. What I wish to emphasize to you now is the indisputable fact that, if you know how to observe, you can gather in one month of well-directed observation such a quantity of happenings that you will be amazed that you could ever have offered as a reason for not writing the excuse that you had nothing to write about.

It is enlightening to see what a professional writer has to say in this regard. H. G. Dwight, in *Mehmish* (Stamboul Nights) says:

> "The fillip of life, for me, is in the small permutations and combinations of incident that make up the lives of us all. And I have often picked up a trait of character or a turn of phrase from a Mehmish that has stood me in good stead with a Pasha. Did you ever realize, however, what an art it is to tell the story of one's day? Women sometimes have it to perfection. We call it gossip, but it is the raw material of literature, and it is better than the glum silences that fill so many habitual tête-à-têtes."

As I pointed out to you earlier in this course, the "fillip of

life" for you will be the happenings which do not seem especially worth collecting and recording to the non-fiction-writer. You may collect them from your own observation, or you may secure them from others. So long as they give the reader the impression of reality the source doesn't matter.

This freedom of selection widens your scope of available material very greatly as you think in terms of plot or narrative-interest. You will be amazed at this scope if you just run over in your mind those happenings which you can classify as crises or turning-points that you have experienced, or that you have observed, or that you have been told about, or that you have read about in the past two weeks. Here, for example, are some of the crises which apart from your own experience you may have seen, or been told about, or have read about.

1. A neighbor tells you that her son, who is poor, has fallen desperately in love with a wealthy girl who has many more eligible suitors, and has sworn to win her.

2. A young man tells you that he has put all his available capital into equipment for a trip to the newly discovered Canadian gold-field where he hopes to make his fortune.

3. You learn from a young man, whose brother has been brutally and mysteriously murdered, that he has sworn to discover and kill the murderer.

4. A woman who is hurrying for a doctor for a child who is critically ill, discovers that a railroad train will crash against an unexpected obstacle if she does not stop to warn it, thus losing precious minutes.

5. A newspaper man, whose creed is that all news must be printed regardless of who suffers, is given an item telling of his son's arrest for embezzlement.

6. A prohibition agent who needs money to make good his son's defalcation, is offered a bribe by makers of poisonous whiskey.

7. A child tells you that he has been promoted in school.

8. You hear that a pugilist has just knocked out an opponent.

9. You read that an arctic explorer, whose ship has been nipped between ice-floes, has abandoned his expedition.

10. A young man offered a bribe to betray an employer decides to remain loyal.

Now, if you will analyze these crises, you will see that they fit into different categories. The first three all show a determination to accomplish something. A young man wants to win a girl. A young man wants to make his fortune. A man wants to discover and punish an unknown murderer. The classification, then, is "some feat to be accomplished."

The next three all show a choice to be made between courses of conduct. The woman may save the train passengers or her child. The newspaper man may suppress or publish. The prohibition agent may accept or refuse the bribe. The classification, then, is "some course to be chosen."

As soon as you can make your readers aware of something to be accomplished or of something to be decided by an actor you have a narrative situation. (A Narrative Problem.)

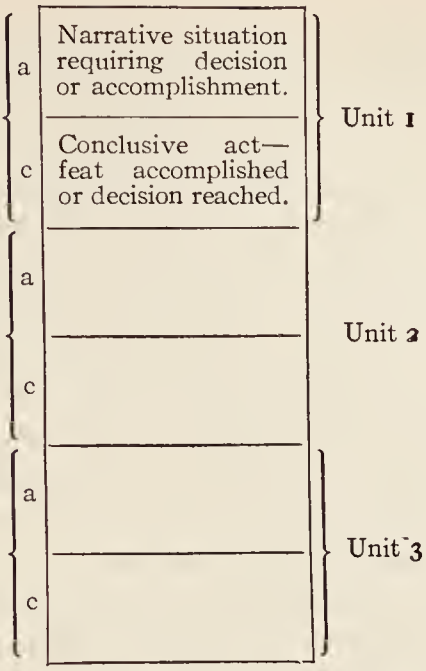
Numbers 7, 8, 9 and 10 can all be classified as conclusive acts. They show that something has been brought to a conclusion. As a reading of the Case Book will show, in a story of either decision or of accomplishment, narrative turning points, or crises, then, consist of the moment when the reader becomes aware that there is some necessity for the character to accomplish some feat, or to decide between courses of conduct, and when he becomes aware that something has been brought to a conclusion of either decision or accomplishment, therefore, a conclusive act. These are narrative turning points. Until the reader is made aware that the actor must accomplish some feat or decide some purpose he is not aware of any narrative interest, or narrative problem.

The narrative problem causes the reader to ask himself a "narrative question." As soon as the reader becomes aware of some feat to be accomplished he phrases, either consciously or subconsciously, a question: "Can the chief actor succeed in accomplishing his purpose?" As soon as the reader is made aware that the character has to choose between two or more choices of conduct, he phrases for himself a narrative question:—"What course of conduct will actor A decide upon?"

In the first case the narrative question is one of accomplishment; in the second it is one of decision. It is the narrative question which determines the narrative situation. There can be no narrative situation without a narrative question, of either accomplishment or decision.

It is quite obvious that the character's attempt to accomplish any feat must either succeed or fail, and that eventually this must be made apparent to the reader. As soon as the reader becomes aware of this success or of this failure, his interest in that particular narrative question ceases. Equally, a person who is torn between the desirability of different courses of conduct must eventually come to some decision, even though that decision be to postpone action for the present. Sometimes this postponement is forced upon the actor by an outside force; by some other person or by some pressing immediate necessity. In effect, this decision to postpone, whether voluntary or involuntary, is *conclusive* as far as the necessity for decision is concerned; a course of conduct in regard to the immediate narrative situation has been decided upon definitely. The reader's interest in that narrative question raised by that particular narrative situation ceases.

As soon as the reader is made aware that an actor's reaction to a stimulus causes him to ask himself a narrative question, the reader's interest is aroused. As soon as he is made aware that the narrative question is answered his interest ceases. Obviously, an outline of a story could be made up of units containing situations arousing narrative questions and of answers to those narrative questions. Sketched it would be like this:



Of course, this is a good start for the structural sketch, but there would be practically no emotional interest. There would be no sense of characters in action, and virtually no suspense; for no sooner would the reader have his curiosity aroused as to the outcome of any situation than that curiosity would be satisfied through a realization that the narrative question raised had been answered. The reader's interest in any narrative situation will last only so long as he is unaware of the outcome of that situation. For that reason the conclusive act which makes him aware of that outcome must be delayed as long as possible if there is to be any suspense. There is only one way to delay this answer, and that is by causing the character to meet a force or forces which will either passively or actively delay or hinder the occurrence of that conclusive act of decision or accomplishment; in other words, by the introduction of other stimuli to which the character can respond. The more responses shown, the greater will be the possibility of your success in stirring the emotions of your reader.

You cannot go far in visualizing any story without seeing an actor or a number of actors in action, responding to stimuli.

Of necessity, everything an actor does or says or thinks must be that actor's response to a stimulus. This is inescapable because everything that any actor ever does, or says, or thinks is his response or reaction to a stimulus. Thus, you see the object of observing in terms of stimuli and of response. It is axiomatic that no actor in a story can respond to a stimulus without becoming aware of that stimulus, so that basically, every character response of an actor to a stimulus is a *meeting* with a stimulus. Therefore, the only way to delay the answer to a narrative question is to make the reader aware of a meeting of a character with a stimulus, or stimuli, *after* the reader has raised that narrative question in his own consciousness, and *before* the reader is made aware of the conclusive act which answers for him that narrative question.

Instantly, you will have become aware of a new category into which to place the results of your observation; the category of meetings. The category of "Meetings" thus embraces three kinds of meetings. It is essential that you learn to distinguish between these kinds of meetings, because each one has its own special purpose, and for that reason I am going to ask you to employ a definite nomenclature which will enable you to avoid any difficulty of misunderstanding. For the first kind of meeting, then, the one which serves to show merely the reaction of the character to a stimulus, the stimulus not reacting upon the actor, I shall ask you to employ the term "incident." The incident is the single act of a single actor reacting to a stimulus, which is itself inactive to the extent of having no design upon the character, thus: "at the stroke of five John Morton laid down his pen." The stimulus is the *condition* of five o'clock striking. The reaction of John Morton is to lay down his pen. In the meeting which we shall hereafter classify as an incident there is no interchange between the stimulus and the actor. The actor alone is responding. That is to say, he reacts; the stimulus does not react. As soon as there is an interchange, there is a meeting of another kind. For example, "Upon the stroke of five, John Morton, noticing that his friend and fellow-worker, Bob England, was still bent over his ledger,

walked across the office and whispered under his breath "Come on, old boy, the tocsin has sounded." "Right you are," his friend responded cheerfully, "I'll just put these books in the safe and be with you in half a minute."

In this type of meeting, two forces meet amicably; there is an interchange without clash, each force forming the stimulus to which the other responds, and each one actively and designedly reacting upon the other. John Morton responds to the sight of Bob England; that response itself becomes the stimulus to which England's speech forms the response. For the purpose of mutual and definite understanding between instructor and instructed, we shall hereafter in talking about this type of meeting of two forces involving *interchange without clash*—employ the technical term "episode."

There is another type of meeting in which two forces meet, but in which the interchange involves clash or conflict. If John Morton crosses to his friend Bob England and suggests that the two go out, only to find that England is irritable and gruff, and is himself roused to retort, then there is a meeting with clash, both forces being stimulated by the action of the other. To describe such a meeting we shall employ the technical term "encounter," which is a meeting of two forces, both actively reacting, *with clash.*

There are, therefore, three kinds of meetings, the incident, the episode and the encounter.

1. The incident is the single act of a single force; it may present either a stimulus or a response. "As soon as he spied the policeman Henry tiptoed across the street" is an incident; it is the single act of a single force. The force is Henry, the act is his tiptoeing across the street. It shows his response to a stimulus, which is the sight of the policeman. That stimulus is presented as an incident. "He (Henry) spied the policeman."

2. The episode is the meeting of two forces without clash; thus:

"As soon as he spied the policeman, Henry tiptoed across the street, and coming up behind the officer, tapped him lightly on the shoulder. The other swung around sharply, his hand

reaching instinctively for his hip pocket. At the sight of Henry he relaxed: 'Yuh frightened me fer a minute,' he said. Henry leaned close 'I'm going up the street for about two minutes. Keep your eye on the door of that garage, and if anybody comes out, blow your whistle.'

"The policeman nodded understandingly. 'Don't be long,' he said. 'There may be something doing any minute now'."

3. The encounter is the meeting of two forces, with clash; thus:

"As the moon rose slowly above the low roof of the garage, Henry could see the policeman crouching in the angle between two buildings. The officer's back was turned, and his gaze was fixed upon the door of No. 29. Tiptoeing with infinite caution, Henry crept up behind him. He was almost upon the bulky figure when the policeman, apparently satisfied by his scrutiny, turned around without haste. At the sight of Henry he stiffened, his hand reaching instinctively for the revolver in his hip pocket. Even after he had recognized Henry he did not change his attitude.

" 'Don't get excited,' said Henry, I'm just going up the street a minute.'

"The policeman continued to gaze at Henry coldly. 'You are not,' he said.

" 'Why?' inquired Henry.

" 'Because I got me orders that nobody leaves this alley before the Chief gets here.'

" 'Good heavens,' said Henry, in annoyance, 'that didn't include newspaper men.'

" 'It goes for everybody,' said the other shortly.

" 'What'll you do if I go ahead?'

" 'Try it and see,' said the policeman, and continued to regard Henry without smiling. When he saw that Henry had apparently no intention of retreating he produced the ugly looking automatic, and pointing it at Henry's stomach, said meaningly, 'Get back where yuh came from, and if yuh make a sound, I'll plug yuh.'

"It was clear to Henry that the officer meant what he said.

There was no profit, he thought, in being shot; so he stepped back, gingerly, to the place he had left."

You are now in a position to add to your sketch of the presentation unit, some clarifying information, by placing after the word Meeting, the explanatory words incident, episode or encounter. The incident is the irreducible minimum. Perhaps the most enlightening instruction a teacher of short-story craftsmanship could ever give is to drill into those people who have difficulty in developing material the comprehension of the basic importance of the incident. Every time you render for your reader an account of a force in action you have begun to write a story. Plotting consists merely of putting that incident into its proper category. It is a simple thing to record an incident to be used in a Story, because it involves merely showing an actor responding to a stimulus, that stimulus being another actor.

You may build that incident up until it becomes an episode by causing the response of the first actor to form the stimulus to which a second actor responds; and the episode may be expanded to the extent to which you keep up the friendly interchange or interaction. Always, however, it will be by the addition of more incidents.

Just as it is possible to build up an incident into an episode, by the addition of other properly selected incidents, so is it possible to build up an episode into an encounter, by the addition of further incidents introduced to show that hostility has entered into the interchange. The incident is always the lowest common denominator.

Arranging incidents so that they form episodes presents no problem. Adding clash to such episodes to produce encounters is comparatively simple; it demands only the most elementary knowledge of craftsmanship; even the mediocre writers do it instinctively. By adding clash they manage to add dramatic effect, but they could keep on doing so forever and they would not achieve narrative or plot interest.

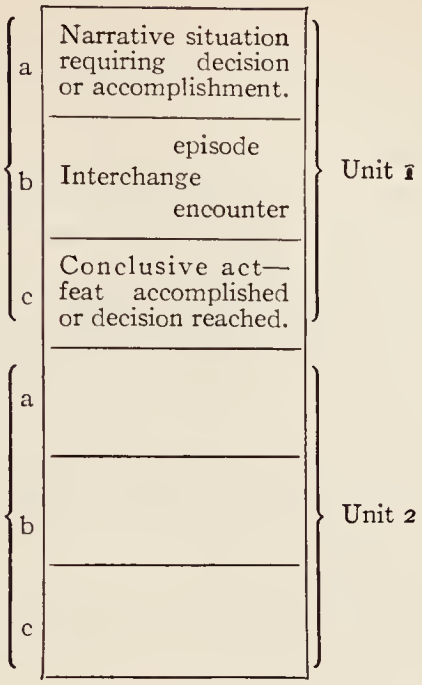
Narrative or plot interest is contributed to any meeting *within the story* in the same way that narrative interest is con-

tributed *to the story as a whole*—by preceding the meeting by its own situation and following it by its own conclusive act. This structural unit of situation—meeting—conclusive act—we shall call a "Scene." A unit within the story, it has exactly the same functional divisions as the whole story.

1. The raising of a scene narrative question to capture the reader's interest by making him aware of a scene situation.
2. The delaying of the answer to that scene narrative question through the readers' interest in the interchange which follows.
3. The answering of the scene narrative question raised, in such a way that there is no longer any doubt in the reader's mind as to the outcome of the interchange.

It is the second of these divisions within the scene which at the present moment concerns you most closely. It may be an incident, an episode, or it may be an encounter. It is so unlikely to be an incident that you can afford to ignore an incident as a possibility for your consideration and narrow down your investigation to the episode and the encounter. Each of the "scene" units that make up the story, you can say with assurance, has the same functions as the complete story, and it has, like the complete story, a Beginning, a Body and an Ending, corresponding to the functional divisions of situation, interchange, conclusive act; the interchange being the Body.

The unit of structure which I sketched for you, now becomes enlarged by the interpolation of another subdivision, and sketched, looks like this:



It is the interchange within this scene unit to which you must devote your best efforts. Upon your ability to present it interestingly and convincingly you must eventually stand or fall. You must, if you are to be successful, apply to it the Laws of Interest. An interchange, you know, may be either an episode or an encounter. But, if it is an episode it cannot be dramatic, because an episode *has no clash.* It cannot be narrative because if there is no clash there can be no alternation of Furtherance and Hindrance, and, therefore, no uncertainty. As soon as you add clash to the interchange you almost inevitably add alternation of Furtherance and Hindrance. As soon as you add Furtherance and Hindrance to the interchange you achieve clash. Thus drama adds narrative and narrative adds drama. But as soon as you add drama, which in the Body is conflict or clash, you change the episode to an encounter. Thus we see that the Body of the narrative unit within the story, which we shall hereafter refer to as a scene, may be either episodic (if it has no conflict or clash), or dramatic (if it has conflict or clash). We now can

draw some very definite conclusions that will go far in clarifying your task.

First. There are two kinds of situations—Story situations and Scene situations.

Second. The Story situation (the main situation) projects the actor into a series of attempts or interchanges, each one having its own scene situation or purpose.

Third. A Scene situation is followed by a single attempt or interchange. Thus, a man's purpose to win a girl would form a story situation. In the course of his attempts to win the girl, the man might need two hundred dollars. His purpose to borrow the two hundred dollars would form the scene situation.

Fourth. The Body of a scene may be an episode. In that case the scene is *an episode scene.*

Fifth. The Body of a scene may be an encounter. In that case the scene is a *dramatic scene.*

Sixth. The incident (the single act of a single force) is the basic structural unit. It may be expanded gradually into

1 episode
2 encounter
3 episodic scene
4 dramatic scene
5 complete story

The dramatic scene contains all the elements of the complete story. It is a miniature short-story. The complete story is made up of the number of these scenes. Clearly, then, if every story consists of a number of scenes, in order to be able to write a short-story you must first be able to

(a) Distinguish between Story situations and Scene situations.
(b) Build up an incident through its different phases until it becomes a dramatic scene.
(c) Present the dramatic scenes convincingly, so that the characters of the actors emerge against an impression of Time and Place.

Throughout each dramatic scene, through the actor's reaction to different stimuli, you will make his *character* clear to your reader. The technical devices for illustrating character you will become familiar with from your study of the Lecture on Characterization. In the long run, you must realize that *characterization is everything* in a story, and that your real reason for familiarizing yourself with structural devices is to acquire complete control of methods in order that you may not be hampered in rendering character through the medium of the Modern Short-Story.

The chief aim of this course is to teach you the fundamental architectural conception of a short-story as a series of blocks, each block being the equivalent of a scene. However, since no architectural conception of a story will *of itself* produce a story, there must be, within that architectural conception, the breath of life which comes from *characterization* of actors responding to stimuli.

The value to you of knowing just what is a scene is inestimable. It is a smaller unit than the complete story, yet in architectural conception it is the same. Being the same in essence as the complete story, the dramatic scene gives you opportunity for developing your plotting ability as well as your presentation ability. It includes:

An impression of Time and Place, and Social Atmosphere.
" " " an actor's appearance.
" " " the stimuli to which the actor responds.

Since the largest number of your scenes will be scenes in which the opposition to an actor is furnished by another actor, the second actor and his responses will be the stimuli to which the first one will respond. Therefore, the first step in a dramatic scene of that kind is to bring the two actors together—To achieve narrative interest you show your reader that one of the actors has a purpose (we shall leave for later consideration the scene requiring choice). To achieve dramatic interest you show your reader that the other actor is opposed to that purpose. So far you are dealing with the Beginning of the

narrative scene. In plotting it you will keep in mind that the purpose of actor A may bring about the meeting with Actor B. For example, if A wants to borrow ten dollars from Actor B he may go to actor B's house or office to meet him. On the other hand, actor A may not think of attempting to persuade B to lend him ten dollars until after he has run into Actor B casually on the street. In this case the purpose grows out of the meeting; in the other case the meeting grew out of the purpose. That is entirely a matter of choice with you as author, depending upon your conception of how things would have happened in real life.

In plotting and presenting a dramatic scene, remember that your detail must give the impression of reproducing real life. In giving your actor a purpose, be sure to reproduce the ordinary purposes which actuate people on every hand. In that way you will achieve verisimilitude, or the appearance of truth. You will find as you observe closely that when one actor meets another his purpose is to secure information; to convince the other of something the other is doubtful about; to persuade the other to adopt a course of conduct; to impress the other with his own importance or lack of importance (if he is trying to evade a tax, for example). As soon as such a purpose appears, the reader is caused to ask himself a scene-narrative-question.

Can Actor A secure information from Actor B?

Can Actor A convince Actor B?

Can Actor A persuade Actor B to adopt a course of conduct?

Can Actor A impress Actor B?

When there is physical clash, the reader asks himself, "Can Actor A overcome Actor B or Force B?" Once you have enlisted the narrative interest of the reader in the purpose of an actor in a scene, and have added dramatic interest by the hint of conflict, which will come in the interchange between the chief actor and the opposing actor, you must take swift advantage of that interest to present the interchange in such a way that the outcome of the actor's attempt to achieve his purpose is in suspense. Every speech or act of Actor A will be intended

to accomplish his object. If this attempt promises success, there is a Furtherance of the Scene-narrative-question.

If from a year's study of this course you mastered nothing but the fact that every attempt of an actor to bring about a narrative purpose is a Furtherance to the purpose and to the scene narrative question raised in the mind of the reader by the knowledge of that purpose, it would be a year well spent, provided you coupled with it the knowledge that the furtherances are introduced to give plausibility to the *Hindrances* which give the dramatic interest through their promise of ultimate disaster or defeat.

Therefore, to ensure a dramatic scene you must be sure to follow every Furtherance (that is, every attempt of an actor to bring about his immediate purpose in that scene) with a Hindrance. To do this you will show the opposing actor attempting, by his speech or act, to prevent the chief actor from accomplishing his purpose. If this attempt promises failure for the chief actor in that immediate purpose, there is a Hindrance to the Scene narrative question. This interchange between Character A and Character B will, in the well balanced scene, occupy the largest proportion of the space.

Finally, in completing the scene you will show the conclusive act of the scene which brings the interchange to a close. This conclusive act will show that the actor whose purpose raised the scene narrative question has either abandoned his purpose or achieved his purpose. It will be either Defeat or its avoidance. The answer to the Scene narrative question will be either Yes or No. It can never be "perhaps," because even though the encounter between Actor A and Actor B results in a draw, it is a defeat for Actor A. He has not achieved his purpose.

Keeping in mind the analogy between the scene and the story, you will add whatever significance there may be as a result of the encounter:

(a) As it affects the Character. For example: "Although victorious, he felt strangely dissatisfied."

(b) As it affects the Opposing Force, For example: "He

glared at Thompson from the corner into which he had been thrown. It was apparent that, although defeated, he was not conquered."

I shall say nothing at the moment about the relation of this step in the scene to the main narrative problem of the story. I shall leave that until we deal, later, with the general problem of plotting the story as opposed to plotting the scene. It is sufficient for you to remember now that the first rate modern short-story is made up of a number of dramatic scenes. Clearly, then, this being the case, in order to be able to write a short-story, you must first be able to plot and write good dramatic scenes.

As soon as a writer has mastered the problem of enlarging encounters into scenes he has achieved narrative interest. Perhaps it would simplify this if I were to say that the problem is one of enlarging meetings into scenes. Narrative interest is added to any meeting by preceding the interchange by a scene purpose showing that the response of an actor to a stimulus is the determination of the actor to accomplish something, and by following this interchange with a conclusive act. The actor whose purpose gives the scene its narrative interest may be any actor in the story. There are, therefore, the following steps to each scene:

1. To bring actor and opposing force together
2. To show that one has a purpose
3. To show interchange
4. To show conclusive act
5. The effect. (By this step you tie your scenes firmly together into a story.)

The fifth step sometimes appears to be missing. This is frequently because there is so much of it that it forms by itself another complete scene. An actor in one scene may have failed to secure a loan of ten dollars. The fifth step may consist of his reflections that he was unwise to ask. It may consist of a visit to another person whom he tries to persuade to give him a job. This visit will itself form another scene.

Problem 3

THE STORY OF ACCOMPLISHMENT ITS PLOTTING; ITS PRESENTATION

THINGS DO NOT HAPPEN. THEY ARE BROUGHT ABOUT

In producing a modern short-story the creative part of your task falls into two general divisions: Presentation and Plotting. For a complete understanding of the one, you must have a complete understanding of the other. In fact, the more you understand about the one the easier will be your grasp of the other. Both are based upon a recognition of the Scene as the Unit. Within the Unit of the scene are subdivisions which contain and yield both presentation interest and plot interest. Presentation interest comes from the first four steps in a scene; upon which I dwelt at length in the lecture upon the Scene as the Unit. Plot interest, which is the tying together of the different presentation units into a pattern, comes from the fifth step.

The presentation units may be any one of the following: incidents, episodes, encounters, episodic scenes, dramatic scenes. Plot interest however, never varies. It comes from the fifth step of a scene, (the effect of the presentation unit upon the plot.) There is no plot interest until there is a fifth step. The fifth step of a scene is a constant factor. It may be present, even though some of the preceding four steps are missing. For example, in Paradise Island the first step only is present (the meeting of Dwyer and the stimulus, which is the ditch.) Yet the fifth or plot step immediately follows. Thus your plot pattern may vary in any one of the following ways:

1. Step 1 meeting	Step 5 plot crisis of story
2. Step 3 interchange	Step 5 plot crisis of story
3. Step 4 conclusive act of scene	Step 5 plot crisis of story

Any step of a scene, except step 2 is a presentation unit.

Plotting is concerned entirely with the fifth step of scenes, even though some of the preceding four steps may be missing. It is therefore more strictly accurate to say that plotting is concerned with the fifth step of scenes, interlarded with meetings or interchanges which are presentation units. It is in the plotting of the fifth steps into a pattern that you will allow your invention full scope. Also in developing the presentation units you will deviate from the recording of actual happenings so that the fifth step may fall in with the plan of your whole story. For example, if George Worts, in setting out to write his story "Sunk," (See Case No. 6 in the Case Book,) had known that a man whose nephew was dissipated wanted the young man to go on a long sea voyage to overcome his craving for drink, he could have written a scene in which the uncle tries to impress upon the nephew that he is no better than the Jake Finches of the Paulota beaches, who are sunk. The minor, or scene narrative question would then have been, "Can Jeffrey Terwilliger succeed in impressing his nephew with the seriousness of his situation."

The fifth step of the scene (the effect of the scene upon the actors) would have been that the story purpose of Jason Terwilliger to overcome his craving for drink would have been announced, together with his agreement to test his redemption when he gets to Trader Purdy's house at Paulota. The four steps of the scene would set forth the condition or state of affairs for the whole story, the fifth step would set forth the chief actor's response, which is his statement of his purpose, that he will overcome his craving. The reader, aware of this purpose, finds himself phrasing a major narrative question for the whole story, "Can Jason Terwilliger overcome his craving for liquor?" In plotting his story, however, Mr. Worts kept in mind his ending, and desiring to keep until the last moment

the secret of the identification of Jake Finch, he changed the main narrative purpose of the character to that of killing Jake Finch, and presented the condition or state of affairs for the story in a scene between the two, in which the nephew's scene purpose was to secure $2000 from his uncle. The narrative question of the scene then becomes, "Can Jason Terwilliger secure $2000 from his uncle?" and the unifying narrative question of the whole story becomes "Can Jason Terwilliger kill Jake Finch?" Assuming the first scene to be actuality, this second one is an adapting of actuality to fit a plot pattern.

Plotting involves the arranging and the *changing or readapting* of materials to fit a pattern. This pattern, in the story of accomplishment, is a very definite skeleton outline, which is quite rigid in its requirements, although quite elastic enough to allow limitless scope for individual adaptation. Just as in architecture the requirements that there must be foundations, wall, and roof to every building do not limit the architect of imagination from a limitless variation in expression within those limits, so in short-story production, the limits of Beginning, Body, and Ending impose no restrictions upon the individuality of the truly imaginative writer. The limit of your imagination is the limit of your ability to plot, which in turn is the measure of the flexibility of your creative capacity. In plotting, you are always adapting reality to the demands of fiction. There will be before you always the conception of fiction as a medium for showing the responses of actors to stimuli, in a pattern of plot crises or fifth steps. Thus your recurring pattern becomes

stimulus
actor impression
actor response
character trait
plot crisis

Every story is a story of character responses. The presentation units give to the skeleton of your story what flesh and blood give to the human skeleton. It is the skeleton, however,

made up of fifth steps, that makes the plot. The skeleton must be there before there can be any *story* interest, as opposed to impressional or emotional interest.

Plotting is concerned not with emotional effect but with narrative effect. In plotting, the sole consideration of the writer is the capturing and sustaining of the reader's narrative interest, through the selection and arrangement of his main plot crises or turning points. This selection and arrangement is designed to arouse in turn narrative curiosity, narrative suspense and satisfaction. The short-story deals with the crises of life which, fortunately for the purpose of the story writer, fall into only two classifications: Situation and Conclusive Act. A Story Situation is something to be accomplished or something to be decided. The Conclusive Act is the outcome of the necessity for either accomplishment or decision. The reader's interest is aroused, as I pointed out, in the introduction through his curiosity as to the character's action at this turning point or situation. His curiosity ceases as soon as he becomes aware of the conclusive act. In between the presentation of the situation and the conclusive act, the reader's attention is held by a meeting or series of meetings. It is my hope that this lecture will simplify the plotting of stories by reducing the process to its essential elements. The material of all stories is the same. The material of all plots is the same: a story situation, an interchange or series of interchanges, and a conclusive act. It is through your presentation of interchanges that you secure your emotional effect. But since plotting is not concerned with emotional effect, during the process of plotting you will regard the interchanges only as incidental to and leading into or out of the main turning points or crises.

I cannot emphasize too strongly the necessity for keeping clearly in mind, during the process of plotting, the difference between the conditions which form a turning point in the life of the chief actor in your story and the actual narrative crisis growing out of those conditions which form the main narrative situation. One of the chief difficulties with writers—that is, aspiring writers—is that they think that a *condition or state of*

affairs is a plot situation. There is no plot situation in the sense in which I use this term—that is a narrative problem—until the reader is made aware of some feat to be accomplished or some choice to be decided upon. Although it may have emotional or impressional interest, a condition *of itself* has no story interest, and is not enough to present to your audience, for two reasons: The first is, the audience cannot tell until you have shown them the reaction of a character to that condition, whether that reaction will call for a decision upon the part of the character or for an accomplishment on his part.

Much clarification will come to you in regard to the whole subject of short-story production once you realize that there are only two possible classifications for stories: 1. Stories of Accomplishment, 2. Stories of Decision. There are variations within these two groups, but they are the essential and fundamental classifications which every writer must make of his plot material. Neither you nor the reader can make such a classification until you know how the actor responds to the initial condition. The actor is at a junction of two roads. One is marked, "Choice to be made." The other is marked, "Feat to be accomplished." That condition or state of affairs exists. The actor may go up one road or the other. He goes up one. Thereafter that road he keeps. It is his adventures upon that road—the interchanges that take place thereon—that interest. The actor may be man or woman. With a woman as chief actor, let us take a *condition* and observe how it becomes a plot situation. If a woman discovers, for example, that her husband is in love with another woman, that is a *condition* or state of affairs. There is no plot interest until the reader knows that her character reaction will show something to be accomplished or something to be decided. You may make clear to your reader that, upon being confronted with this condition, this woman is torn in her mind between courses of conduct. Her maternal instinct may urge her to save him; her pride may urge her to leave him. In that case, your Story Plot is one of decision, because the outcome of that conflict between these different urges will be a *decision.*

On the other hand, you may show that upon being confronted

by this condition the woman determines to win back her husband's affection. You then have made your readers aware of something to be accomplished by the chief actor. If you will turn to the Case Book you will find two stories that illustrate this difference admirably. Case No. 11, "Women are Wiser" by Frank R. Adams, is a story of decision or choice. Case No. 10 "Western Stuff," by Mary Brecht Pulver, is a story of accomplishment. In both the initial condition is essentially the same. In "Women are Wiser" the main character is uncertain as to whether she wants her husband back. In "Western Stuff," however, there is no indecision on the part of the main character as to what feat she hopes to accomplish. It is to regain her husband. Indeed it may be said that in "Western Stuff" the decision comes at once, and leads into a Story Plot of accomplishment.

All plot situations of accomplishment are really continuations of stories of decision. Except in unusual cases, the character, becoming aware that a condition or state of affairs exists decides to accomplish something. "Jake Bolton," 551, (Case No. 4 in the Case Book) is an exception. The character is not consciously aware of a purpose. But in most stories of accomplishment the character conceives the purpose. Purpose is, in fact, the *raison d'être* of the story of accomplishment. The story of accomplishment varies so distinctly from the story of decision that it will be simplest in our consideration of plotting to take the story of accomplishment and the story of decision for separate discussion, considering first the story of accomplishment.

The initial Presentation Units are intended and are selected to make clear to the reader that a character has reached a turning point in his or her life, and is confronted by a condition or state of affairs which calls upon him to accomplish something. The character's acceptance of this requirement brings about a plot situation of accomplishment. This main narrative crisis or main narrative purpose precipitates or necessitates an interchange or series of interchanges or attempts. The character in the course of his efforts to accomplish his purpose meets,

either accidentally or intentionally, a force which stands in the way of that accomplishment. Each of these meetings results in another crisis or turning point. Finally there is a conclusive crisis which ends the story.

Out of this unifying central purpose will grow a series of crises which are so arranged as to form a plot. The plot situation or Plot Purpose of the story will give to these crises their unity of narrative or plot interest. It is a single narrative interest. In other words, in a plot you have a single pattern. It should deal with a single interesting narrative situation or narrative problem. The simplest way to assure this unity of narrative interest is to present the single situation or narrative problem as it confronts a single character. You will not readily understand your task as a short-story writer until you comprehend the necessity for this dual unity of character and plot.

A single character is shown reacting to a certain condition or state of affairs in such a way that a single main narrative purpose or main narrative situation arises. The reader, being made aware of this Purpose, is able to say to himself, "Bill Jones wants to win the girl," or "The gallant captain wants to overcome the enemy." In any case his interest is won by the knowledge of something to be accomplished, and he finds himself asking a question, "Can Bill Jones win the girl?" or "Can the gallant captain succeed in overcoming the enemy?" A question arises in his mind as to the outcome. This narrative problem, therefore, gives rise to the happy term which I first heard used by Professor Chauncey W. Wells, of the University of California. He calls it a "Narrative Question." It is this main narrative question, raised in the reader's mind at the earliest possible moment, that captures the reader's interest, and it is the reader's desire to know the answer to this main narrative question which holds that reader's interest. That is "Narrative Curiosity."

When this main narrative question is answered the reader's interest ceases. Therefore, if you hope to become a competent short-story craftsman you will learn to introduce this main narrative question at the earliest possible moment, and to delay

its answering until the latest possible moment. You will keep your reader interested by keeping him in suspense. This story narrative question which you will cause him to ask himself will, in the story of accomplishment, be phrased by him,—"Can—succeed in—?" He is aware of some purpose actuating a character. As soon as the character accomplishes his purpose, the story narrative question which the reader has asked himself, is answered, and the reader's interest in the story narrative question ends. Now, since this ending must be delayed as long as possible, and since the story must be both plausible and interesting, the character to be plausibly and interestingly delayed in accomplishing his purpose must encounter forces at variance with his narrative purpose.

In every story there must be this conflict of the main character with opposing forces. It is, in fact, this conflict which gives dramatic interest to the real story. Everything preceding it is introduced to lead up to it; everything following it is introduced to show the results of it. Every short-story is built about this conflict. Obviously, then, every modern short-story must have three general functional divisions.

The first of these divisions is the capturing of the reader's interest by showing him that there is something to be accomplished, thus causing him to ask himself a narrative question.

The second is the delaying of the answer to that narrative question by keeping the reader interested in a number of attempts of the character to answer that narrative question. During the series of attempts the reader is kept in suspense as to the outcome of the story narrative question by plot crises or turning points which will occur as the fifth steps of each of those attempts or interchanges. In the story of accomplishment the attempts may involve interchanges or encounters of different kinds: mental, oral, or physical.

The third division is the answering of the story narrative question raised in the reader's mind in such a way that the reader is aware of the solution of the problem.

These functional divisions have also parallel structural divisions. (1) The Beginning, (2) The Body, (3) The Ending.

The Beginning arouses the reader's interest by raising in his mind a main narrative question. It shows him that there is a plot situation—that a character is confronted by the necessity of accomplishing some feat, and it shows the importance or unusualness of that situation.

In the story of accomplishment the Body of the story presents to the reader a series of attempts of the character to accomplish his purpose, these attempts being the natural outcome of the main or story narrative purpose. During these attempts he is caused to meet a number of forces, either friendly or hostile. In selecting attempts or interchanges which you will include in the Body of your story you will be careful to preserve the narrative unity of the whole story by utilizing only those attempts or interchanges whose results form crises or turning points in regard to the main narrative question raised in the Beginning of your story by the main or story narrative question. The word "crisis" is here employed in the sense in which physicians use it to indicate that a point has been reached in the progress of a disease when a patient takes a definite turn for better or worse. No interchange or attempt will be included in the Body of your story which does not thus contribute to the narrative unity by resulting in a narrative crisis or turning point. If it does not so contribute it must either be rejected entirely or so amended as to form a crisis which will delay the ultimate answer to the main narrative question raised in the Beginning.

The Ending of the story shows the reader conclusively that the narrative question by which his interest was captured in the Beginning of the story is answered either affirmatively or negatively in the story of accomplishment. The character either succeeds in accomplishing his purpose or he admits, beyond any question, that he cannot succeed.

Not until you throw overboard all theories about single effect meaning only single emotional effect upon the reader, and realize that there is also a single narrative effect through interest in a single main narrative question and its crises, can you proceed any distance along the road that leads to the mastery of short-

story production, particularly that portion of it which is involved in plotting or structure.

Plotting cannot be completely divorced from presentation. The presentation of the short-story comes after its plotting. It consists of the development of the plot or main narrative purpose through a series of attempts or interchanges; and it is here that you immediately see the advantage of the dramatist's method of presenting the material of your stories. Your task is more closely allied in presentation to that of the dramatist than to that of the novelist, and the dramatist's approach to your material is the soundest approach. The dramatist *sees his story in interchanges between characters.* As you follow this method of looking at your material and arranging it into interchanges you gain in visualizing and organizing power. You capture your reader's interest by raising a certain plot narrative question. You answer that question. But before answering it you achieve your suspense by selecting meetings which show characters in action against a background striving, despite opposition, to solve a narrative problem—to answer a main narrative question.

An examination of your own reactions to any successful play or story will show you that in so far as the author is successful in creating character, you glory in the triumph of a desirable character and in the overthrow of an undesirable character: in the success of the hero and in the foiling of the villain. The more successful you find the hero, the greater is your joy—provided, of course always, that he is not made improbably successful. Yet, the more obstacles he removes, and the more difficult these obstacles are; the more opponents he overcomes, and the more powerful and sinister the opponents, the more likely you are to admire the hero. YOUR TASK, LOOKING UPON YOURSELF AS A CRAFTSMAN, IS TO PROVIDE OBSTACLES AND OPPONENTS FOR YOUR HERO, AND TO MAKE THEM AS DIFFICULT AS POSSIBLE TO REMOVE OR OVERCOME.

If the hero began at once and reached his objectives without encountering any obstacle, or solved his problem without any interference from an opponent THERE WOULD BE NO STORY

INTEREST, because there would be no conflict, and no main turning points of hindrance at the close of the interchanges, to cause uncertainty or suspense as to the ultimate outcome of the main narrative purpose. So you are forced inevitably to the conclusion that the ultimate success of the hero cannot be too sudden nor too easy, because then there would be no uncertainty.

You will be puzzled by an apparent contradiction. On the one hand will be your own instinctive feeling that there ought to be an alternation of Furtherance and Hindrance in the main crises. On the other hand is your certain knowledge that the greater number of published stories which you read and find interesting, contain almost entirely main crises of hindrance. Clearly then the editor's feeling is that a story should have as many hindering crises as possible. Your instinct is sound and so is the editor's demand. The explanation of this apparent contradiction is that while the major crises which result from the interchanges shall ordinarily be crises of Hindrance, the alternation of Furtherance and Hindrance will be *within the interchanges* and not the *result* of the interchanges.

It is apparent that there cannot be any Furtherances or Hindrances in an *interchange* until there is a scene narrative question, because we must be aware of the scene purpose before we can be aware that it is being either furthered or hindered. Therefore, the interchanges from which we, as readers, are to get the minor furtherances and hindrances must be preceded by a scene purpose in order that a scene narrative question may emerge. While the major narrative question of every story must be important, this requirement does not apply to the separate narrative questions of the scenes within the story. They need not be intrinsically important, because they borrow their importance from the major narrative question of the story. Thus, the story narrative question can be "Can Bill Jones win the girl?" In order to win the girl he may have to establish himself in business; and in order to establish himself in business he may have to have a certain amount of capital, say

$2000. If, in attempting to further his main purpose of winning the girl, he goes to a banker and tries to borrow $2000, there is a scene. If he succeeds in borrowing the money it is a furtherance to his main purpose. If he fails, it is a hindrance. But the minor narrative question which gives that scene its unity is simply, "Can Bill Jones succeed in borrowing $2000?" or "Can Bill Jones succeed in persuading the banker to adopt a certain course of conduct?" Any question at all will do for a minor narrative question; and because this is so there is no problem whatever in giving a narrative unity to any interchange.

The scene, then, making up the body of the story, is in its organization exactly like the complete story. It has its Beginning, which sets forth a scene purpose; it has an interchange; and it has an Ending, which is the result of that interchange and is a conclusive act. It is conclusive, however, only in so far as that particular attempt or interchange is concerned, and is inconclusive in regard to the main narrative question of the complete story.

The Body of every story, then, will consist of a scene, at least, and almost certainly of a series of scenes. Each scene will raise its own immediate narrative question and the answer to that minor narrative question will be delayed by its own furthering and hindering minor crises *which will alternate.* The fifth step of each scene will present a major or plot crisis which will be, whenever possible, a crisis of hindrance. During the time that he is reading a well plotted and well presented scene, the reader's attention is temporarily concentrated upon that scene to the exclusion of everything else. The fifth step recalls to him the major narrative question of the story which his interest in the scene has relegated to the background of his consciousness, and shows him how it is affected by what happened in the scene.

There can be only three kinds of scene: a mental scene, in which the character is shown in such a way that the reader is aware of a struggle between the character's purpose (that is, his narative purpose in that scene) and some inner force at

variance with his desire. For example, he may wish to forge a check in order to raise a certain sum of money. But some force within his character prevents him from so doing, delays or hampers his immediate solution of the problem in that manner. This force may be cowardice, uprightness, or canniness, but it is some force at variance with his purpose.

The struggle may be an oral struggle, and the character in this case will be confronted with another human being. The argument will be entirely a wordy one. The main character will be opposed by the other person. Everything that the character does will be intended to further his immediate scene purpose, and ultimately to answer the main narrative question successfully. Everything that the other person does will be intended to hinder or delay both the scene and the main narrative purpose of the main character. For example, Bill Jones, in trying to borrow money from the banker, will advance every argument he can think of which will help his cause. The banker will bring up every reason which he can consider to delay Bill's getting the money. Finally, one or the other is successful in the encounter. If Bill is successful, it is a Furtherance of the main narrative purpose. If the banker is successful, it is a Hindrance to the main narrative purpose.

The third kind of encounter is the physical encounter, in which a character fights with another character, a human being of either sex, who stands in the way of his accomplishing his immediate purpose. Sometimes this physical encounter is with a member of the animal kingdom, that is, a fierce dog, a wild horse, or a denizen of the forest, who must be overcome before the hero can accomplish his central purpose. Again, he may have to overcome some condition in Nature or environment such as a swollen river, which must be crossed, or a slippery or snow covered road, which may delay him in an automobile trip when time is an important consideration in the accomplishment of his main purpose.

It is during the reading of scenes that the reader is kept interested by suspense, by a desire to know "what happens next?" or "how can he overcome *that* obstacle?" Therefore

you cannot escape the conclusion that there must be within the scenes a nice balancing of FURTHERING AND HINDERING action, which seems to be true. Here, again, it is wise to insist that *action need not always be violent.* Perhaps it might be well to substitute the word *incident* for the word *action,* and to phrase your conclusion thus:—

The *development* of the Story Narrative Question or the PLOT is carried on through interchanges scenically presented, which show *within themselves* a nice alternation of FURTHERING AND HINDERING INCIDENTS. Furthermore, one scene may contain such alternation to an unlimited extent.

The furthering and hindering incidents within each scene must alternate for two reasons:—

First: Remember that the character is in a difficulty from which he must extricate himself. To continue furtherance too long would be to *remove suspense.* Suspense comes from uncertainty as to the outcome of a conflict.

Second: An uninterrupted series of hindrances within a scene will not be very convincing to the reader, unless you want to portray a very weak character, unable to make an effort to overcome any obstacle. It is important that you realize that an *effort,* even though clearly hopeless, is a furtherance.

Yet all this discussion refers to the *development* of the plot narrative question which is the function of the *Body* of the story. Before you can develop the plot narrative question to *hold* your reader's interest, you must *introduce* the plot narrative question to *capture* your reader's interest, and that introduction, you know by now, is the function of the *Beginning* of the story.

While it is important to remember that all stories are composed of presentation units which are usually interchanges or scenes, it is essential to a mastery of craftsmanship to realize that there is about the presentation units in each of the three major divisions of your story something distinctive, which is not characteristic of the presentation units in the other parts. For example, in the Beginning, the presentation unit, to be complete, must show the character confronted by a problem

demanding, for its solution, action on his part. It is a crisis in his life, a significant moment. His reaction to it, in terms of a purpose, makes it a plot situation of accomplishment. For the understanding of this situation, the reader must know what is involved. He needs explanatory matter in regard to character, setting, and the *importance* of the plot situation—how much depends upon the accomplishment. But primarily, distinguishing this portion of the story from the Body or the Ending, is the necessity that it shall contain the *Promise of Conflict,* to remove a difficulty, to overcome dangerous opposing forces, or to avert disaster. It must foreshadow a struggle, if the character ever meets certain forces. A story narrative question is opened up.

"Can John Doe, at this crisis,
succeed in.....
despite .....?"

The Ending of your story will be the final conclusive *act,* which shows the reader that John Doe has either achieved his purpose successfully, or has admitted beyond all doubt his inability to do so. The story narrative question raised in the Beginning is answered.

But neither the Beginning nor the Ending has any natural and intrinsic story interest. They are really explanatory matter and since they are explantory matter they must be compressed to the limit. The Beginning leads up to and gives a reason for the dramatic scenes of the Body. The Ending shows the result of, and justifies those dramatic scenes of the Body. The *story proper* begins when the character meets the first obstacle, and ends with the outcome of his meeting with the final obstacle. Story interest, which is *sustained attention* begins with the Body of the story, with the character's efforts to answer the story narrative question raised in the reader's mind in the Beginning of the story. As long as the reader can be kept interested in the character's effort to answer this main narrative question, your story can be continued.

But, you will say, it becomes apparent, after reading a little of some story, just how the main narrative question will eventually be answered :—the hero will win the girl. Yet I continue reading. What is it that makes me go on? You go on simply because, although you anticipate the answer to the main narrative question raised in the Beginning of the story, a new scene narrative question has arisen in each of the scenes within the Body of the story, or a new main crisis of hindrance is apparent :—the hero has got himself into more trouble. A *new scene purpose* is evident. Before the hero can succeed in his main attempt, he must succeed in overcoming certain immediate obstacles or forces. In order that you may understand the writer's formula for sustaining interest by keeping the outcome in suspense, you need only to read the following extract from "Vanity Fair." It comes in that part of the story where Becky Sharp, who is then acting as companion to the rich Miss Crawley, has secretly married Captain Rawdon Crawley, her employer's nephew. She is still debating whether to confess to Miss Crawley.

"That night Rebecca sang more sweetly and talked more pleasantly than she had ever been heard to do in Park Lane. She twined herself round the heart of Miss Crawley . . . she said she desired no other lot than to remain forever with her dear benefactress. 'My dear little creature,' the old lady said, 'I don't intend to let you stir for years, that you may depend upon. . . . You must stay and take care of the old woman.' "

If Rawdon Crawley had been then and there present, (says Thackeray) instead of being at the Club nervously drinking claret, the pair might have gone down on their knees before the old spinster, avowed all, and been forgiven in a twinkling. But that good chance was denied to the young couple, *doubtless in order that this story might be written, in which numbers of their wonderful adventures are narrated—adventures which could never have occurred to them if they had been housed and sheltered under the comfortable, uninteresting forgiveness of Miss Crawley.*

The Body of the story is concerned with the *interesting* conflict which ensues as a result of the main purpose of the character. To every conflict, of course, there must be two parties, since "it takes two to make a row." Within the Body of the story the reader is interested when he is *shown* that conflict, rather than when he is *told about it.* The more you examine the work of expert craftsmen, the more you will realize that the reader's interest in the plot is *sustained* by a series of hindering major crises, each of which is the *result* of a meeting of forces, and therefore, the fifth step of a scene. But you will not be completely master of the short-story form until you realize that such a crisis of hindrance is most effective when it is preceded by that meeting, *pictorially presented.*

The fundamental thing to remember is that the reader is interested in "seeing something happening," in having the interchanges presented pictorially. At the end of each interchange there must have been a certain progress made, a certain turning point in the plot reached, a certain amount of explanation given, which will enlighten all that comes afterward. In the Beginning of the story these crises will be directed *narratively* toward setting forth the main purpose and *dramatically* emphasizing the Probability of Conflict.

In the Body of the story, on the other hand, the crises which are the result of each meeting are directed toward a different end:—the causing of a feeling of suspense—of fear, regarding a still uncertain outcome.

To cause this uncertainty you will arrange these crises so that the hindrances predominate, and are in the forefront of your reader's consciousness. If the exigencies of your plot require that your character's attempt shall at the close of an interchange, result in a main furtherance, if you wish to retain story interest, you will at once introduce a dramatic hindrance by pointing out the promise of new difficulty, opposition, or disaster. In that way the reader's interest is sustained, a sort of breathlessness seizes him, he is forever asking himself, "Now what will the hero do when he encounters that obstacle?" "Can the boy escape from the murderer's cabin without being

discovered?" "Can the sorely tempted bank clerk resist his desire to abscond with the bank's funds?" "Can the quiet little man in the corner defeat the bully in a fair fight?" In selecting and arranging these obstacles, the ingenuity of the writer is taxed. The problem is again one of craftsmanship. Experience comes to the writer's aid.

The established writer is identified by his knowledge of one simple rule in selecting conditions, obstacles, or opponents. It is this: The ideal conditions, obstacles, or opponents are those involving interchanges which give every indication of resulting in defeat or disaster. Every condition which the hero is called upon to meet should be made to appear to the reader to present an insuperable obstacle. Yet, no matter how ingenious you are in selecting and arranging your major crises, your work is only half done until you have learned presentation. Many good plots are spoiled in presentation, and spoiled unnecessarily. For presentation is *writing,* which depends upon a knowledge of English Composition. The more you know of the technical elements of English Composition, the more easily you will master the technical elements of any sort of specialized writing, whether it be the Drama, the Novel, the Essay, the Poem, the Short-Story, or any other genre.

There was a time when the teaching of English Composition was uncorrelated, when the elements were in a state of chaos. The late Professor Barrett Wendell did an astounding thing; he proved that the writing of English was almost an exact science. He showed that English Composition could actually be learned step by step; that it had three major divisions: Unity, Coherence, and Emphasis.

These rules of Unity, Coherence, and Emphasis apply to the structure of the short-story. Narrative Unity comes first of all. You must always keep in mind your main narrative question. You must not introduce extraneous material. If any part of your story does not fulfil one or more of the three requirements of developing the character, the narrative crises and the setting, no matter how much you like that part of your story, *you must reject it*—for that story certainly. If it is

something you *must* write, then you must write a story of which it is an integral part.

Coherence is equally important. When you have three scenes, A, B, and C, B must grow out of A, and must lead inevitably to C. The actions must be cumulative. A step removed ought to destroy the completeness. That is to say the actions of the character should bring about the crisis, and in turn, the crisis should shape the actions of the character.

As for Emphasis, I need scarcely speak of that. Even the veriest beginner knows that the important parts of a story are the Beginning and the Ending, the Beginning setting forth the main narrative question, the Ending answering it.

In general it is simplest to plot the major crises of your story first, in skeleton form, to make sure that out of the necessity for accomplishment there shall naturally arise a certain number of interchanges as a result of which there will emerge major crises of hindrance. There is finally a conclusive act which answers the main narrative question raised by the main situation.

Then you may take up each of the interchanges, and in turn form for each one a minor narrative question which will give it a unity of its own and which will lead to the major crisis which is its result. It is always best to determine upon your Ending as soon as possible, in order that you may direct all your presentation units and their fifth steps plausibly and interestingly toward crises which are either narrative or dramatic hindrances to that Ending. Part of your plotting will be determining the presentation units which you will use in the Beginning and the Ending. That is to say, whether you will use incident, episode, encounters, episodic or dramatic scenes. In the Body your task is clear cut. The interchanges shall be, wherever possible, dramatic scenes. The decision, in plotting the Beginning or Ending, will be made for you largely by the amount of explanatory matter which is necessary to make everything clear and plausible to the reader. But those are matters which will be taken up in detail in the special discussions of the problems of plotting the Beginning and the End-

ing of stories. Your main problem in plotting is to get your hero into trouble, and to make clear to your reader that he is in trouble, and then to get him out, after you have taken him through a series of encounters, presented as scenes in order to maintain the interest.

In plotting your story therefore, your preliminary organization of material will consist in outlining major crises. You will expedite this by answering certain questions which you will put to yourself. You may do much of this questioning and answering without putting pen to paper. Sometimes, even, you may do it after you have written the first draft of a story, as a check up, to see whether your story is soundly constructed. But this last method is wasteful of your time and effort, because upon examination, much written work may be found not to contribute to the unity of your narrative and may have to be destroyed, whereas you will save waste motion if, in advance, you ask yourself, and answer eight simple questions:

1. Who is my main character?
2. What condition or state of affairs confronts him, forming a crisis or turning point in his life, projecting a narrative purpose, showing something to be accomplished, and foreshadowing dramatic interchanges?
3. Does the explanatory matter necessary to emphasize the importance of that major purpose consist of
   The promise of conflict to remove difficulties, or
   The promise of conflict to overcome opposing forces, or
   The promise of conflict to avert disaster?
4. What is the main narrative question raised by that main situation?
5. What presentation units comprise the Beginning?
6. What is the answer to the main narrative question?
7. What presentation units comprise the Ending?
8. By what hindering narrative crises is the answer delayed?

In "The Only Two Ways to Write a Story," I have gone into detailed analyses of stories, showing how these questions may be answered. An examination of these analyses will show you

that before you can hope to publish short stories with any certainty of continuous output, you must understand plotting, which is, reduced to its lowest terms, a series of selected and arranged interesting narrative turning points. Mark well the requirement that they shall be interesting. It was Arnold Bennett in "The Author's Craft" who said:—"In proportion as the interest of the story is maintained, the plot is a good one. In so far as it lapses, the plot is a bad one."

Problem 4

THE STORY OF DECISION
ITS PLOTTING — ITS PRESENTATION

"WHATEVER YOU DO, YOU'LL REGRET IT"

Throughout this course of lectures you will remember that I have stressed again and again the importance to the writer of presentation. I have urged you to practice at all times the writing of presentation units, which you will remember are incidents, episodes, encounters, episodic scenes, and dramatic scenes. You will remember too that I have stressed frequently that the first four steps of the scene are concerned with presentation, and that plotting does not enter into your consideration during the process of writing until you come to the fifth step of your scene, or of your presentation unit, which may be one of the component parts of a dramatic scene.

It is the fifth step which deals with the turning point of the plot. In the scenes which go to make up the story of decision there is no variation in either form or content from the scene of a story of accomplishment. The same four steps exist in the presentation unit. It is in the fifth step that we find the essential difference between those stories which are stories of accomplishment and those stories which are stories of decision or choice. The story of accomplishment is, as you will remember, built about a purpose of a main character. To this purpose the fifth step of a scene provides hindrances which may be dramatic hindrances or narrative hindrances. If they are dramatic hindrances they make plain to the reader the promise of conflict to overcome a difficulty, to overcome

an opponent, or to avert disaster. They are essentially the foreshadowing of disaster of some kind, that is a disaster threatening the successful outcome of the purpose. If they are narrative hindrances, they are defeat, they indicate that at a certain point in the story the hero, or main character, has failed in one of the attempts which he hopes will bring about eventual success.

Before there can be any hindrances or furtherances to a purpose it is quite evident that there must be a purpose. It is as a result of the purpose that the narrative hindrances come. The dramatic crises, which are the promises of conflict, may come before the main purpose is apparent. They are not dependent upon that purpose for their existence and for their interest. You may thus have in a story of purpose a long beginning. You may have three or four presentation units each one of which may be a dramatic scene, of which the fifth step is a main dramatic crisis. Your first presentation unit will end in a promise of conflict, or overcome a difficulty. Your second presentation unit will end in a promise of conflict to overcome an opponent. Your third will end in a promise of conflict to overcome disaster, and your fourth will end in a statement of the main narrative purpose of the story. This is not a very usual arrangement of the units in a story of purpose, but it is a possible one. On the other hand, this is practically the only possible arrangement in the story of decision, for the reason which I will dwell upon later.

The story of decision or choice is, as opposed to the story of accomplishment or purpose, one in which the main narrative problem confronting the main character is one which calls upon him to make an immediate choice of conduct. It is dependent for its conclusion entirely upon a trait of character. The story of purpose on the other hand may be dependent for its conclusion on an ability or capacity of the person having nothing much to do with his character. That is to say, it is not a characterizing ability. It may occur in people of various characters. The basic outline of the beginning of the story of choice or decision and the basic outline of the begin-

ning of the story of accomplishment or purpose can in many cases be the very same up to the point where the main problem emerges. In both stories the character is called upon to act. In the story of purpose the decision that the character reaches projects a meeting with opposing forces. In the story of decision, the decision which the character makes is the Conclusive Act of the story. It is clear, then, that the story of decision has in its beginning the same basic plot elements as the story of purpose or accomplishment, these elements being the promise of difficulty to be overcome, the promise of an opponent to be overcome, the promise of disaster to be averted, and a main problem. But in the story of decision this problem is one of choice, whereas in the story of accomplishment it is one of purpose.

If we assume for a moment that there are four scenes each of eight hundred words in the beginning of each of the two stories which we are considering, and that the norm for a scene or presentation unit is eight hundred words, there remains in the body of the story of purpose the possibility of developing each one of the promises of conflict into a separate scene for the body which would give to the story an added length of twenty-four hundred words, or three additional scenes of eight hundred words each, which would make a total of six thousand words for the story, this six thousand being a very good average length. In the fifth step each one of these scenes would be definitely tied to the main problem by being a hindrance to the main purpose of the actor.

I have already pointed out, however, that in the story of choice the main problem is not one of purpose and therefore there cannot be hindrances at the close of each scene in the body. The body of the story of decision is not concerned with the attempt to attain the success of a purpose. The main problem is one of choice. The only conflict there can be is a mental conflict, and uncertainty in the mind of the main actor as to just what choice he will make. It is quite clear that even though you made a scene for the body of your story out of the conflict which ensued in the mind of the character,

such a scene could not possibly occupy more than the eight hundred words limit, so that you would then have a short story of only four thousand words, made up of the original thirty-two hundred words in the beginning and the eight hundred words in the body, which at its conclusion would end the story; because the story of decision is over as soon as the mental conflict is finished and the decision is made.

In order that you may understand the essential difference between the story of decision and the story of accomplishment I want you to look over the story called "The Face in the Window," by William Dudley Pelley (Case No. 9 in the Case Book). The present story occupies 1702 lines. It is led up to through a decision of the character, who is Cora McBride. Had it been treated purely and simply as a story of decision, it would have opened on line 109, and it would have closed on line 659. And instead of containing 1702 lines it would have contained only 550. On lines 515 to 611 there is the mental conflict which would make up the body of the story were it a story of decision. In the story by Adela Rogers St. John, "The Haunted Lady" (Case No. 14 in the Case Book), lines 908 to 980 show the mental struggle of Gretchen Innes as she tries to decide what course of conduct to adopt in regard to furnishing the alibi for Maurice Greer. Lines 908 to 980 indicate the struggle itself. Lines 981 to 1048 show the decision. You will find this particularly interesting because the actual decision is shown in an interchange between this woman and the district attorney. This interchange is also the fifth step of the mental struggle. It is presented as an interchange because the competent literary craftsman realizes that an interchange is always so much more interesting than a series of analyses of the thoughts of a character. This particular interchange is illuminating as it illustrates the desirability of having two people, that is to say two actors, carry the bulk of the information instead of having it done by an author.

Before writing the story of decision you must make a complete readjustment of your ideas as to what constitutes

the body of a story. In the story of accomplishment or purpose, the body is simply the development of the promises of conflict growing out of the main purpose. In the story of decision, on the other hand, since there can be only one conflict, the body of the story must necessarily be limited to a single mental conflict. It can be generally accepted that a mental conflict is not very interesting. It is the least interesting of all the types of conflict. You will, I am sure, be interested in going over the other stories of decision in the Case Book, Cases Nos. 11 to 21, and discovering that those other stories do not contain any such mental conflict. Instead of this you will find that the beginning sets forth the various possibilities lying before the actor after the condition or state of affairs has been presented. This combination of conditions plus possibilities of choice makes up the beginning of the story of decision or choice. Then, instead of there being a mental conflict there is no such conflict shown, but instead, the decision is immediately presented to the audience.

You cannot completely master the technique of the story of decision until you fix firmly in your mind the basic principle that in the ordinary story of decision *there is no body*. The interest in the story of purpose or accomplishment is in the struggle growing out of the main situation, the contrary is the case in the story of decision. In the story of decision the interest is in the situation, that is, it is in the beginning, in the conditions leading up to the situation, and in the situation itself.

The interest in the story of decision is in the problem and its solution. A great many very competent writers seem to have a blind spot in regard to this type of story. It is traceable to faulty teaching. The fault lay first in not recognizing that there is a type story which has its interest in a situation requiring choice. Many writers, instinctively realizing that these stories that they are trying to write are stories of decision, but being unaware of this category, have tried to apply to the story of decision the technique of the story of accomplishment. The two treatments do not go together

at all. Secondly, even though writers hit upon the method of the story of decision, they spoil the treatment by prolonging the mental conflict.

The mental conflict can seldom go over eight hundred words. Most writers are wise in avoiding it. It takes an extremely competent writer to render such a struggle as an interesting series of sense impressions, because the struggle is an intellectual one, and the appeal to the intellect should be confined to plausibility rather than to interest.

You will remember that there has been much insistence throughout upon the necessity for keeping clearly before you the five steps which go to make up a scene, and that they are the meeting, the narrative purpose of that scene, the interchange, the conclusive act, and the sequel to that conclusive act or to the interchange. These same five steps which characterize a scene are also carried throughout the story. Instead of the meeting you have usually a series of meetings which fix the condition or state of affairs. Growing out of that, the first step, is the second step which states the narrative problem, which may be one of accomplishment or may be one requiring choice. The third step of the story is the interchanges growing out of the main problem of purpose or choice. The fourth step is the conclusive act which tells us that the problem of either accomplishment or choice has been solved. The fifth step is the sequel to this accomplishment or choice.

Just as in the scene certain elements are sometimes lacking, so in the story itself certain elements are lacking. In the story of decision the third step, which is the interchange, is usually omitted, and therefore, there remains for utilization only the other steps, the condition, the narrative problem, the decision, and the sequel. It is clear then that the story of decision, having virtually no body or third step, must get its length from either the beginning or from the ending. The ending you will remember, has two subdivisions, the decisive act and the sequel to that decisive act.

In order that you may see this clearly I shall ask you to examine two of the stories in the Case Book particularly. One

is Case No. 11, Frank R. Adams' story "Women Are Wiser." The second is Case No. 14, Adela Rogers St. John's story "The Haunted Lady."

In "Women Are Wiser" the condition is set forth in the interchanges between Roger and Faith and between Faith and Mr. Bennett. The plot situation, showing the possibilities of choice, are set forth in the interchange between Faith and Mrs. Bennett, following that with her husband. The conclusive act is set forth in lines 613 to 617 as follows: "Before dinner she telephoned to her mother-in-law 'I have burned them,' she said briefly, 'and I am going to try to be one half as lovely as you are.' "

The balance of the story, the interchange between Roger and his wife, and the interchange between Mrs. Bennett and her husband, are the *sequel* to that decisive act.

You will see from the study of this story that the beginning occupies the bulk of the story, taking up 612 lines out of a total of 733 lines. The decisive act itself occupies only 5 lines, and *there is no body whatsoever to this story.*

If you will now turn to "The Haunted Lady" you will discover that just the opposite is true. Out of a total of 1442 lines 907 are devoted to the beginning. Line 908 to line 1048 contain the body and the decisive act. The decisive act in this case, instead of occupying only a few lines, takes up lines 981 to 1048. From 1049 to line 1442 is occupied with the sequel. Thus the ending containing the decisive act and the sequel contains 462 lines, from 981 to 1442.

The study of these two stories will show you that either in the beginning or in the ending the story of decision acquires its length. Architecturally viewed all stories look the same. They are a series of interchanges which take the form of blocks to the architecturally-minded writer. The number of these blocks may vary, but the total of them will fall into the general divisions of beginning, body and ending. In the story of decision however, the body will be either omitted or compressed, and the length must come from the beginning or the ending; and not so much from that part of the end-

ing which is the decisive act, as from that part of the ending which is the sequel.

There has been, as I have said, a good deal of faulty teaching in regard to the type story which we now call the story of decision or choice. This faulty teaching takes the form of saying that the story of decision is really not a story of plot at all, but it is a story of character. The contrary is really the fact. The story of decision is just as dependent on a knowledge of plotting as is the story of accomplishment. In fact, it depends upon it a great deal more. But the basic misconception lies in the failure to realize that the crises of a plot may be *dramatic* as well as *narrative*. In the story of decision the main narrative problem of choice is not presented until the conclusion of a number of interchanges. Readers are so constituted that they will read an interchange through, unless it is extremely dull. That much of their interest the writer can depend upon. But if, at the end of the interchange there is no fifth step, which marks a crisis of drama or of narrative, the reader is unlikely to be interested in the next interchange. The plot crises, I have pointed out, will be, in the beginning of the story of decision, promises of conflict or disaster. If they are not apparent the reader is unlikely to go ahead with the next interchange. You can therefore see that in the story of decision plot is extremely important because the crises of plot which follow the scenes or interchanges are what hold the reader's interest in the whole story.

At the close of an interchange the reader's interest will be heightened if he knows at least one of the possible choices lying before the character. For example, in the story "Shadowed," by Mary Synon (Case No. 16) on line 169 you will find that one course of conduct lying before Senator Stroude is stated in the words of the mountaineer, "I'll tell her nothing but that you wouldn't come. Nothing else matters. And I think you owe her that, at least." At the close of the next interchange with the servant you realize that Senator Manning and two other gentlemen are coming to see Senator Stroude that night on the way from the Pan-

American dinner, and that it is very important. As a result of the talk with his wife the two courses of conduct become apparent. One is that he may go back to the other woman, the other is that he may accept the presidential nomination. On line 904 we also learn that he may make the choice definitely, that "It's an old story and one not likely to explode unless . . . I choose to revive it by an overt act. . . . There's only one way the newspapers could get the story. I'd have to lead them to it." Also we learn that it is necessary that the Senator shall be at the conference because without him, Covinger, who is the all-important man, may switch. At the end of the next interchange we learn that, "out of the depths of his spirit he had told her that he would come to her if she should ever need him. It was a promise given not only to the woman who had heard and heeded it, but to the God of his Faith and his Fathers. If he failed to keep it no matter what the cost he would be violating more than an old love. He would be tearing down his own code." Beginning on line 1098 and ending on line 1183 there is the mental struggle which is resolved by the conclusive act on line 1184, "He folded it back into the envelope and put it in his pocket. 'You aren't going?' Rhoda asked him, her voice strangely strained. 'Yes,' he said, 'I'm going.'" The interchange continues down to line 1218 which says, "'If you will,' he said." The balance of the story forms the sequel, composed of the interchange, lines 1219–1244, and the reflections of the main character upon that interchange beginning line 1245, "As the train slipped past the Potomac—" to the end.

The plotting of the story of decision varies quite definitely from the plotting of the story of purpose or accomplishment. The story of purpose is the story of what the psychologists are wont to call "wish fulfilment." The character has a wish. He proceeds in a series of encounters to try to put that wish into effect. The story usually closes with the wish fulfilled or the purpose achieved. Sometimes there is a variant in which the purpose is not achieved, that is, it has been definitely abandoned. But this is in most cases a variant.

The story of decision goes beyond wish fulfilment. It usually implies a struggle in the mind of a character between an opportunity for wish fulfilment and a standard of conduct. That is to say, there is an opportunity to profit in such a way that a long-held wish will be fulfilled; but in order to partake of this success the character must abandon a standard of conduct. That is one type of decision story.

Of this type is the story "Shadowed," by Mary Synon. The opportunity to profit and to bring about the fulfilment of a wish comes when it is apparent that the Senator may receive the nomination if he so desires. On the other hand, to do so will mean to abandon his standard of conduct which is that a word passed must be kept. He decided to adhere to his standard of conduct. The story "Shoddy" (Case No. 17 in the Case Book) is an example of a man who has an opportunity to profit by putting inferior material into his locomotives. He realizes that this means abandoning a standard of achievement which is really a standard of conduct. He decides in favor of the standard of conduct.

In "Gentility" (Case No. 13 in the Case Book) when Stukeley is offered an opportunity to profit which involves a permission to the dope peddler to go ahead with his nefarious trade Stukeley instantly decides against the opportunity to profit. But in "The Roads We Take" (Case No. 18, the Case Book) when O. Henry shows the man who has a chance to make a good deal of money by squeezing a friend, the opportunity to profit and the standard of conduct are the same, and the broker chooses to see his friend squeezed, just as in another incarnation as an outlaw he refuses to have his horse carry double.

There is another type story of decision in which the opportunity to profit is not involved. The actor in such a story is like the young man who approached Socrates with a problem. He asked the learned Greek if he would advise him to marry or remain single. Without a moment's hesitation Socrates replied, "Whichever you do you'll regret it." In this second type story of decision the choices all seem to embrace

disaster, and whichever one the actor chooses he will apparently be sure to regret it. The importance of such a story is ensured by the fact that, throughout, disaster threatens. An example of this is the story "Women Are Wiser," by Frank R. Adams, (Case No. 11), "The Haunted Lady," by Adela Rogers St. John, (Case No. 14), "The Trouble with Men," by Lucian Carey, (Case No. 15), and "The Mummy," by John Galsworthy, (Case No. 19).

In plotting the short-story, therefore, you must first determine whether your story is one which involves the choice between an opportunity to profit and a standard of conduct, or one which embraces choices all of which appear to be undesirable, and to threaten disaster.

Just as in the story of accomplishment you ask yourself certain questions, there are also in the story of decision certain questions which will help you in keeping your plot clearly before you. They are these: 1. Who is the main character, that is, who is the person who has to choose? 2. What is the condition which confronts this character, requiring an immediate decision? 3. What possible choices are open to the character? 4. What choice does the character make? 5. What is the outcome or sequel to this choice?

When I first began to teach the craftsmanship of short-story writing I was approached by a woman who asked me, "Must I always have my complete story in mind before I begin it?" I said "No. But you must have before you end it." Particularly is this true in the ending of the story of decision or choice. You state your situation, that is, you tell the conditions which exist, you tell the problem facing the actor, and then you must show *what the actor does about it.* But in addition to this you owe it to your readers to tell why the actor did this thing. There are two places in which you can do this. You can do it in an interchange which includes the conclusive act, as in the case of the story "Shadowed" in which the man discusses with his wife the reason for his course of conduct. Or you can do it, as Frank R. Adams did, by having the girl call up her mother-in-law and explain

to her why she is doing what she did, or you can have it in the sequel as in the story "The Haunted Lady," by Adela Rogers St. John, (Case No. 14), in which Gretchen and her husband discuss what has occurred and she explains to him why she came to the decision she eventually reached.

Plotting the story of decision is not at all difficult once you understand what basically constitutes the difference between it and the story of accomplishment. The real problem in producing a story of decision lies in the presentation of such a story. That is to say, in the selection of presentation units to lead up to the crises or turning points of the plot, in the selection of incidents, episodes, encounters, episodic scenes or dramatic scenes to present to the audience the information you desire them to have.

It might be well to pause a moment to assure yourself as to just what this information involves. The story of decision is essentially a story of a triumph of one trait of character over other traits of character. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that there shall be included at the earliest possible moment the information that the actor possesses such a trait of character. The other information that must be presented to the reader is the urgency of the necessity for decision. Following this there must come the information as to the possible choices open to the actor, and as to the disaster involved should such a choice be wrong.

At this point in the course there ought to be no doubt in your minds as to the relative desirability of the different presentation units. By long odds the dramatic scene is the most desirable. On the other hand, it is quite possible that the demands of your story may be such that you cannot bring together two people who would naturally clash, so that you will be forced to content yourself with an episodic scene, that is, a meeting between two people followed by an interchange without clash. As I have pointed out to you on several occasions, if the interchange is without clash there should follow immediately a dramatic crisis.

Throughout the remainder of the story the interchanges

will be between various people, and not always do they include the main actor. It is a safe generalization, however, to say that the first interchange should include the main actor and whoever else will give to the reader most plausibly and interestingly the information which you desire the reader to have in an interchange which should preferably be a dramatic scene, but which will sometimes because of the demands of your plot, be an episodic scene.

You may employ instead of an episodic scene a series of incidents, showing the reactions of the main actor to the stimuli of which he becomes aware in terms of the traits of character which it will be your purpose to show to the reader.

The problem of presenting the story of decision is clearly one of selecting the right interchanges and including in them the information which will lead to those crises which are sure to be dramatic. Since there is scarcely ever a body to the story, this problem of presentation will involve the beginning and the ending and the sequel. Here more than anywhere else it is essential that you shall be in complete control of the methods of presenting material. You will see why I have insisted so much upon the importance of being able to write convincing scenes. Without that ability you cannot write the story of decision. You will remember that in the story of decision the main narrative problem frequently does not come until the conclusion of several interchanges. It is therefore essential that you shall be able to write interesting interchanges. If you cannot do this your stories of decision will be dull and will cause in the reader that boredom to which there is no answer.

As in the story of accomplishment there are two kinds of beginning, the chronological and the flashback, so there are in the story of decision. In the Case Book I have gone into these more in detail than I shall do here. I shall merely indicate the variation and say a word or two about the method. Flashing back means a going back in the mind of the character or in the mind of the author to what has passed before

the moment at which the story opens. It must go back actually, and present a scene out of the past exactly as if it were being shown upon the screen before us. If, for example, your story opens as "The Haunted Lady" opens, with the crash of the glass at eight o'clock in the evening, and at eight fifteen Gretchen Innes tells her husband about what has happened in the past when she and Maurice Greer were together in the garden, that is *not* a flashback scene because it is being presented later in time.

On the other hand, on line 50 of "The Mummy," the main actor is sitting in the end shelter of the Devon watering place, on line 51 the *author* flashes back in time to the moment when Eugene Daunt was five years old. That is a flashback in the true sense. In "Women Are Wiser" there is a flashback interchange which begins on line 102. "That very morning." The previous time mentioned was on line 88, "She got the summons shortly after Roger had left for the office." This flashback interchange continues to line 134, and ends with the threat of disaster should the main actor, who is Faith, make a wrong choice, because it shows that decidedly, "Roger, as a playfellow would be an exceedingly difficult person to do without, especially after you had once been accustomed to him." On line 284 in "The Haunted Lady" there is a flashback scene which goes in time from the moment when Gretchen is talking to her husband back to "At four o'clock on a certain night in June now almost a year ago." The flashback continues through various interchanges up to line 584. At line 585 we are brought back to Burke and Gretchen Innes again, face to face in the warm intimacy of their fire-lit library.

The reason for choosing a flashback as opposed to a chronological beginning is a perfectly obvious one. Told chronologically the beginning would not reach a crucial point soon enough. If, for example, this crucial point which would catch the interest of the reader immediately, came at the end of the second interchange in chronological order, the natural thing to do, if you wish to step up the interest of your beginning,

is to present the second interchange first, and to follow it by the first interchange, flashing back to the first one.

The method involved in such a flashback is exactly the same as that involved in a flashback in a story of accomplishment. There is however, another type of flashback beginning for the story of decision which is certainly more complicated, but which becomes simplified as soon as you understand the basic process. "The Mummy" is an extraordinary fine example of this type of flashback beginning. It might not be out of place to say here that the flashback itself may include several interchanges. Thus the flashback, as a whole, continues until the reader is brought back in time *to the point where he began to flash back.* For example, in "The Mummy," the reader is caused to flash back at the moment that Eugene Daunt is in the end shelter of the Devon watering place, and when the writer says, "He looked a little like a red Indian. Had there ever been one who needed their stoicism more—or needed it less?" This is on line 50. Everything thereafter up to line 705 is in flashback. At line 706 the reader is brought back again by the words, "In the shelter, huddled into the corner out of the increasing wind, he passed his shaking hand over the bone and skin of his face." In this type of flashback the process is much more simple than it looks. It consists of writing the interchanges in their chronological order, which in this case would consist in opening the story on line 51, continuing it through to line 705, then including lines 1 to 50, and going on from there to lines 706 to 836.

If you will read the story in this fashion you will see that the final scene of the story would begin on line 1, if it were told chronologically, would continue through to line 50, then to line 706, and so on to the end.

I am asking you to do this in order that you may realize quite clearly and graphically that a flashback of this type is brought about by splitting the final scene in two, placing the first half of it at the opening of the story, and the second half of it at the end of the story.

Eugene Daunt has always had to choose between effort

and its avoidance. His choice has always been to avoid effort by turning to the playing of games. Various crises have arisen in his life, and have been solved in this way. At last there comes a great moment in his life, which seems to threaten disaster to this method of avoiding effort. Yet Eugene Daunt does, in this final moment of his life, turn from effort to the playing of a game by entering into a competition with himself to hit a log five times in fifty throws. In the Case Book I have discussed this story, and the principles which it illustrates, in a good deal more detail than I have time for in a lecture which must of necessity be general rather than specific.

The main thing that I wish you to learn from this lecture is that the story of decision is dependent largely for its effect upon the capacity of the writer to present scenes, or at least to present convincing interchanges, which will usually be scenes.

Whether you are plotting the story of decision or the story of accomplishment makes no difference. The basic principles are the same. It is the application of the fifth step to the main problem of your story that makes your plot. In the story of decision, since there is usually no body, you must achieve the length by an artificial body, which will come in the division of the beginning or in the division of the ending. It is unimportant which one, so long as the interchanges occur, and are made, *of themselves,* interesting to the reader, and are also made to contribute to the main problem in their fifth steps.

Keep in mind always, that no matter what you are writing, your success will depend upon your ability to present scenes and to bind those scenes together in their fifth steps to a main problem.

It is not amiss to say here a word or two as to the reason for this fifth step being emphasized at the close of each scene. If you are a competent writer your scenes will be so interesting that the reader will be taken out of himself, and will be actually watching the events portrayed in those scenes. He is

temporarily unaware of anything else. His whole attention is concentrated on what is passing in that interchange. If you follow immediately with another good interchange, his attention will be again diverted, but he will be mixed up because he will not be able to see the relationship of that interchange to the former one. That is the purpose of writing the fifth step. It is to tell him what it is all about, and to show him the relation of what has just passed in the scene to the main problem, either as it complicates that problem or as it shows possibilities of choice which will threaten disaster.

The story of the future will almost certainly be a story of decision. The ability to write such stories will be the mark of the competent craftsman. More and more people are reaching a point in the development of their interest, where their struggles are not spectacular ones, and therefore not very readily made pictorial. Their struggles too, are usually individual struggles, and not readily visualized as important to other people. But the basic problems remain essentially the same. The conflict between the opportunity to profit and the standard of conduct will always be a story of decision even though standards of conduct may change with changes of convention.

It is important, therefore, in choosing the plot situations for stories of decision to choose problems which are of general interest, and it is equally important to choose solutions which are possible for the reader. The reader of a magazine in taking up a story of decision, says to himself, "Here is a person who is in essentially the same dilemma which I am facing. Now I find here a solution which I can adapt to my particular case."

The writer of the story of decision has to face a very serious ethical problem himself. Realizing that a great many people will read his story and will be swayed by the decision there portrayed, he must feel sure that the decision which he advocates for such a dilemma is one which, if adopted, will not cause great misery.

It is not, however, the function of this course of lectures

to give advice on any subject other than those technical problems which are sure to arise in the working day of any writer. Anything else would be effrontery. I shall therefore close by giving you the advice which I feel is most important to you. That is the basic advice which applies to stories of decision equally with stories of accomplishment. It is, "SEE YOUR STORY IN SCENES."

Problem 5

THE CHOICE OF A NARRATOR

Up to this point you have been concerned with analyzing and classifying the materials of your craft, and with structural considerations. You have proved to your own satisfaction that no matter what kind of story you write, your materials will always be happenings, selected because they illustrate Setting, Character and Crisis; these being to you what the ingredients of his medicine are to the pharmacist. You have been interested in isolating the component parts of the Short-Story. You have discovered the fundamental fact that a plot is merely the arrangement of crises. Your knowledge of the underlying structural requirements of a Short-Story enables you now to arrange your material roughly into Beginnings, Bodies and Endings, of either scenes or complete stories, and to add incidents together so as to form an episode, which is the first form of the interchange between Character and juxtaposed force. Furthermore, you know that the episode may grow through progressive stages of encounter and scene; and that every complete story contains a number of scenes.

These, however, are questions dealing primarily with the artist and his material; they come under Plotting, not under Presentation. They involve the stages of observation, selection and rejection; of invention and arrangement. It is possible to complete this part of your task in a series of rough notes or outlines. The third, and most important factor, the reader, looms larger as soon as you enter upon the final stage of your task,—the combining and *presenting* of this material to your reader. You change from an analyst into a creative artist, keeping in mind your artistic purpose of causing an illusion of

reality so that the reader will be taken out of himself and raised by your magic from his ordinary humdrum level of emotion to a new emotional height. Knowing the potentialities of your materials, and having in general terms defined their arrangement, your problem is to present them to your reader to the best advantage, so that he will react in the way you wish. How can you be sure you get the best results?

The very first artistic problem confronting you is the decision as to the angle of narration, who is to tell your story; through whose words the action is to be laid before your reader. Three possibilities present themselves. First, you may permit the reader to learn of the happenings as they are interpreted to him in the words of the main actor, who is the author of the story as well as the chief actor, using throughout the first personal pronoun. An example of this is Sherwood Anderson's story, "I'm a Fool," reprint of which accompanies this Lecture. Second, the reader may see the action as interpreted to him, in the first person, by an observer taking a very minor part, or no part at all, in the action. An example of this is J. P. Marquand's story, "The Spitting Cat," a reprint of which accompanies this Lecture. Third, you may present the story by the objective method of the third person author-observer, allowing the story to tell itself, adding only such interpretation as is essential to the understanding of the action. All the stories in the Case Book are examples.

Keeping in mind always that your stories must contain Interest and Plausibility, and that the materials you have to work with are Setting, Character and Crises, you will let these considerations guide you in weighing the advantages and disadvantages of the three Choices of a Narrator.

(a) Hero-narrator; who uses the first personal pronoun to tell you of happenings of which he was the center and the moving force.

(b) Narrator who is not the hero; who uses the first personal pronoun in telling about happenings of which someone else was the center.

(c) The objective narrator; who never appears in the story himself, but who tells in the third person, of happenings of which someone else was the center.

I have named them in that order, because that is the order in which the aspiring writer ordinarily considers them.

In regard to Interest, the first person hero-narrator's angle of narration is intriguing. It has its advantages and disadvantages. The first and greatest advantage is that when a man says that a certain thing happened to him, people are interested in that happening very much, if they know the man. But in fiction, the main character must ordinarily, if he is the narrator of his own exploits, be a different person in every story, so that the element of personal acquaintance is scarcely to be availed of. But assuming for the moment that it was possible to have a man tell a number of stories of which he was the hero, so that the reader came to know him as a character, would that reader still regard him as a hero if he always played up his own good qualities? Hardly! People do not admire boastfulness; they sheer away from the man who is continually blowing his own horn, either orally or in print. Too much of the first personal pronoun causes the reader to lose his interest. There are many people who will not read stories written in the first person.

But, you will say, many excellent stories have been told by the hero as narrator. If you will examine these stories you will find that usually such a hero-narrator is not a character who is entirely admirable, or if he is a modest fellow, exciting the reader's admiration, he is dwarfed by the action of the story, some tremendous combination of events of which he happens to be the center really carrying the interest. Therefore, as regards Interest, you may say that if you want a character to tell a story against himself, you can have a hero-narrator; but if you want a character who is admirable, you will hesitate because of the danger of the reader losing his interest through a dislike for the egotism of the hero-narrator. However, if the action narrated is of compelling interest, the

Angle of Narration may be that of the hero-narrator. So much, then, in regard to the advantages and disadvantages in establishing *Interest*. Let us see now what the Angle of Narration has to offer you in respect to Plausibility:

In regard to Plausibility, it is in its contribution to Plausibility that the Angle of Narration of the hero-narrator scores highest. If a man says that a thing happened to him, the reader, provided he has no reason to doubt the narrator's truthfulness or his sincerity, feels sure that he is getting an authentic account of the crises, major and minor, as they occur. Crises are not everything; you have, besides, Character and Setting. Among the methods of portraying character you will remember are the indication of salient details of appearance; of actions which are violent; and of such subtle actions as glances, attitudes, postures, etc.; and of thoughts and feelings, either analyzed or clothed in words. When you consider using a hero-narrator as the teller of a story, you will do well to ask yourself how and when this hero-narrator is to observe his own appearance, when he is to be aware of his self-revealing subtle acts; when he may be introspective? Again the answer is: when the experience is the real topic of interest, or when the revelation of character is such that to all intents and purposes, the hero-narrator is detachedly observing his own character as if it were that of another person, or when he is unconsciously giving himself away—in short, when the narrative is a "confession," either conscious or unintentional.

A typical example, and one well worth studying as a specimen of the highest development of this Angle of Narration is Sherwood Anderson's "I'm a Fool." I know of no other story told by a hero-narrator (that doesn't mean that there isn't another story) which has the quality of convincingness to such an extent as this. If you will turn to the reprint of it you will see that its very opening paragraph attains this convincingness.

"It was a hard jolt for me, one of the most bitterest I ever had to face. And it all came about through my own foolishness, too. Even yet sometimes, when I think of it, I want to cry or swear or kick myself. Perhaps even now, after all this

time, there will be a kind of satisfaction in making myself look cheap by telling it."

The reader feels no resentment at egotism on reading this, because there is none. Instead, he is conscious of a feeling of pity and understanding, and sympathy for the man who admits the "most bitterest" jolt of his life came about through his own foolishness.

There is superb artistry in this story; craftsmanship of the highest order. Yet, it is, in the last analysis, a "confession" type of story, in which the hero-narrator is dissecting his soul; the experience is offered for analysis by the teller, that teller's character emerging apparently as a by-product.

Yet, the hero-narrator telling a story in the first person has not fulfilled all his functions in relating the crises making up the great experience, and in betraying his own character; besides he has to show minor characters, and he has to present different settings. Causing the hero-narrator to describe minor characters will give you no concern, for the simple reason that the method of description is essentially the same, whoever is telling the story. If the hero-narrator in describing a minor character says, "He was a short, rotund man of middle age, with flabby features and cold, fishy, blue eyes," the hero-narrator is using exactly the same method as the narrator who is a minor character, or the objective observer who uses the third person. Either of the others could have said, "He was a short, rotund man of middle age, with flabby features, and cold, fishy, blue eyes!" The sentence standing alone might have been written by the hero-narrator, the unimportant narrator with only a small part in the story, or the objective observer with no part whatever in the story. But when you put this sentence to the test of plausibility, you come to the difference between conversation and writing: writing is formal, conversation informal. Few people talking would say, "He was a short, rotund man of middle age, with flabby features, and cold, fishy, blue eyes." It is not colloquial.

Sherwood Anderson does not fall into this error of causing a character to write when he ought to *talk in character*. Here is

a description of a girl. "Gee, she was a peach! She had on a soft dress, kind of blue stuff, and it looked carelessly made, but was well sewed and made and everything. I knew that much. I blushed when she looked right at me and so did she. She was the nicest girl I've ever seen in my life. She wasn't stuck on herself and she could talk proper grammar without being like a school teacher or something like that. What I mean is, she was O. K."

In regard to Minor Characters: In using a hero-narrator as the teller of the tale in which there are many diverse characters you put a large strain upon plausibility, because you are forced to select as your hero-narrator a person with the ability to observe and analyze, and portray character; one who can observe and translate in terms of art all the subtle acts which disclose character, and one who can reproduce conversation convincingly. He must have the ability to mimic; he must be able to reproduce dialect, to switch from one dialect to another, and in so doing not only must he portray the character of others, but he must in his own actions and reactions be consistent throughout. So manifestly difficult is this task of portraying clearly differentiated characters that the competent artist always hesitates to delegate it to a hero-narrator, unless he sees some very real gain to counterbalance the disadvantage. Normally, you will find that it is not necessary. What you gain in Plausibility from the authenticity of the story told by the person to whom the experience happened, you lose when the hero narrator is forced to perform functions not his by right. Again, you come to the conclusion that the hero-narrator's Angle of Narration is to be used with caution, and had best be avoided when much portrayal of minor characters is involved, where much change of scene is necessary, and where much dialogue is to be used. It is not the Angle of Narration which is most desirable when minor characters are used for purposes other than to form the stimuli to which the main actor responds.

In Regard to Setting: As soon as the question of background arises, you come naturally to the consideration of the Angle of

Narration as it touches upon the Setting of your story. The purpose of setting is essentially to give a background for your characters at the same time that it contributes to the Effect upon the Reader by reproducing in his mind an *impression* of a certain place that will convey the social atmosphere. To reproduce this impression requires an art which is subtle and difficult, and presupposes the hero-narrator to have the qualities of sensitiveness to his surroundings and the artistic creative ability necessary to the translation of his sensations and emotions in terms of art.

In "I'm a Fool" Sherwood Anderson shows his craftsmanship in this respect. The hero-narrator is conscious of the sights and sounds and smells, but he is inarticulate when it comes to reproducing them. He mentions them *en passant* but does not strive for literary effect. He says:

"Gee whiz, Gosh amighty, the nice hickory nut and beechnut and oaks and other kinds of trees along the roads, all brown and red, and the good smells, and Burt singing a song that was called Deep River, and the country girls at the windows of houses, and everything."

As soon as you endow your hero-narrator with literary gifts, you make it harder for your reader to think of him as a unique personality, for most literary men write more or less in the same manner, as far as the average reader can see, or at least as far as he cares. In order to have a hero-narrator who has the unusual combination of artistic sensitiveness and creative ability to contribute more than the detached observer, you must have a hero-narrator who will place on his settings the stamp of his own individuality, which to retain plausibility, must be consistent with his actions throughout the story. So you see that in permitting the hero-narrator to tell the story in the first person, you are placing an undue strain on Plausibility when you come to a story in which Setting plays any large part, unless the action is such as might easily have been participated in by a cultivated person of artistic sensitiveness and creative ability. And thus you find the Angle of the hero-narrator almost inevitably relegated to the story where the happenings

themselves would be interesting no matter who told of them, or where the hero who is telling the story is not an admirable character.

Where the hero-narrator scores is chiefly in the story containing an unusual confession or the story of unusual events. It is only here then, that your choice of the hero-narrator as the teller of the story is at all desirable, because such a narrator adds to the feeling of authenticity; but the story must be a story of happenings or experiences that dwarf the character, the happenings themselves being the factor by which the reader's interest is captured and by which it is sustained. It must be some event out of the ordinary, something tremendous, overwhelming, straining credulity. Under such conditions there are great advantages in having a hero-narrator tell of it. Unbelief is swept away or forestalled by the man who says not only, "This happened," but also, "This happened; I know it happened, because it happened to me." In this kind of story there is no question of the gain in Plausibility, yet there is a danger against which you must be always on your guard. The man who knows that the thing happened because he saw it happen to himself must of necessity, if there is to be any simultaneous action in two or more different places, be unaware of many other things connected with the action, which he did not see. In the story in which groups of opposing forces conspire against the main character, to provide obstacles to his success unknown to him, the angle of the hero-narrator is not desirable, because in such a story no one person could be the central figure in all the scenes. Otherwise he is concealing something from his audience of readers which, if disclosed at the outset, would have destroyed suspense. He must forego the use of the unexpected as a method of clinching interest. So another fact becomes apparent in your problem of the Angle of Narration. It is that for the story in which the interest lies chiefly in the happenings, the angle of the hero-narrator is best when confined to a story which is very short, intensely dramatic, so that Character and Setting are subordinate.

Style and the hero-narrator: One other consideration enters

into your choice; that is, Style. In order to achieve plausibility and consistency, the style of the teller of the tale must not vary.

I have mentioned Sherwood Anderson's story "I'm a Fool" as an example of first rate craftsmanship in the use of the hero-narrator's angle of narration.

Always, of course, although there are variations within all well-defined patterns, the basic pattern is the starting point. You will find writers who intrude their personal comments into a story unnecessarily. Some readers like it; some don't. Usually such writers are people who have achieved a certain distinction in other forms of writing before they began to write fiction, and who have a public who are enough interested in them to read everything they say. But in the long run, this is poor craftsmanship, because it breaks the thread of illusion. The writer succeeds in transporting the reader from his ordinary humdrum level of emotion, or lack of emotion, to a new emotional height; the reader becomes interested in the progress of the character in his attempts to solve the problem raised by the situation which confronts him; he becomes so convinced that the character exists that he forgets about the author, who is no more present, and has no more right to be present than any outsider. Consequently, when the author makes himself felt as a distinct alien personality, he is running a risk. The reader is likely to resent the intrusion, just as he would resent the appearance on the stage during a dramatic love scene, of the author of the play.

The author of a story has no more right to intrude than the author of a play. That is why I say it is poor craftsmanship to interpolate anything not essential to an understanding of the action. I do not say that it is against the rules. There are no rules. The blank sheets of paper are to a writer what the ocean is to a master mariner. There are no speed-laws; but there are certain possibilities of disaster. The greatest of these is BOREDOM. The reader is in a strategic position. At any moment he may put down the story and refuse to read further. He will do so for two reasons. One is that he does not find the story INTERESTING; the other is that he does

not find the story PLAUSIBLE. Between the Scylla of BOREDOM on one hand and the Charybdis of UNBELIEF on the other, the writer must steer his frail cargo of emotional appeals. For that, after all, is his task. He is essaying to reproduce in the reader the emotion which he felt upon observing the happenings he is engaged in narrating in the capacity of either hero or observer. The natural tendency of the inexpert craftsman is to attempt to gain plausibility through employing the first person. Frequently he fails. Then he turns to the third person, sacrificing the authenticity of direct testimony.

The material and the author's purpose, in most cases, dictate the treatment automatically. They do so, obviously, in Sherwood Anderson's case. In order to understand this story, its significance particularly, its importance to the main character, we must know exactly how that character felt throughout the course of happenings. Clearly, the best person to interpret the thoughts of that character, certainly the person with the most extensive and intensive knowledge of that character's thoughts, is the character himself. More than any other person in the whole world he knows what happened and what were his reactions to the happenings. Beyond doubt, then, the most obvious angle of narration for this story is that of the hero-narrator, the word "hero" indicating not so much a heroic figure as a central character. Here, as in all other phases of producing a story, the selection of a narrator is a problem of craftsmanship; it is the first artistic problem.

Craftsmanship is expert knowledge. When a man has written enough stories he has met all the problems he will ever be called upon to meet. When he can overcome all of them without much difficulty, when his subconscious mind says "that's a problem of arrangement, or that's a problem of presentation, or that's a problem of angle of narration; there are three or four solutions; but I know that I've always been able to get results by such and such a method," then he has arrived. He is like the automobile driver who has been driving a car under all sorts of conditions for fifteen or twenty years. The appearance in his field of vision of the drunken driver, the speed demon, the

slippery road, the mudhole, are all problems which he has met before and which he scarcely admits as problems of craftsmanship. He solves them subconsciously. Sometimes, no matter how much driving a man does, he cannot overcome, or at least he does not try to overcome, certain faults. He will back out without looking; he will come around curves on the wrong side of the road; he will speed up to beat the train to a crossing; but he does those things usually not from ignorance, but because he does not want to bother to be more careful. With writers that is also the case; except that writers do not admit it; they call it temperament. Not so with the writer who is a great artist. Sherwood Anderson *is* one. And he is at his best in this story, "I'm a Fool." He succeeded in solving his technical problems because he was a craftsman. Interest and Plausibility are both preserved.

Now, what are the pitfalls against which Mr. Anderson had to guard? What were his problems; and how did he meet them? The first and foremost one was to establish the authenticity of this person who is telling the story, as its central character in the first person, and to do so without losing the reader's interest, either in that character or in the happenings. As regards interest, there are advantages and disadvantages which come with the choice of a hero-narrator. The first and greatest advantage, as I pointed out to you, is that when a man says that a certain thing happened to him we are interested in the happening very much if we know the man. The disadvantage of the first person hero-narrator is that readers do not admire egotism.

Too much of the first personal pronoun causes the reader to lose his interest in the person using it. But there is another kind of interest besides character interest; it is narrative or happening interest, which comes from a knowledge on the reader's part of a narrative-situation; of something to be accomplished or something to be decided. Also, the competent craftsman is aware, either consciously or subconsciously, of the other kinds of interest, such as curiosity and satisfaction. He utilizes them wherever necessary. Mr. Anderson avoids

his first pitfall (the dislike of egotism) in his very title; and he continues to consolidate his character in the esteem of the reader in his very first sentence of the very first paragraph. The introductory lines have the double barrelled effect of removing any feeling of dislike for egotism; because no egotism is displayed, and of arousing the reader's interest through exciting his curiosity as to what "jolt" the main character suffered on that October afternoon at Sandusky, Ohio. The very quality of the man narrating the happenings begins to pervade the happenings from the instant he says, "there will be a kind of satisfaction in making myself look cheap by telling of it." Nobody can resent that as egotism. That the man feels the happening deeply the reader gathers, when he learns from the casual "even now," that some time has elapsed, and that the wound is still unhealed.

Once having swept those obstacles from his path, Mr. Anderson fills in the background of the main actor's character which is essential to the reader's understanding of the importance of the happenings to him. Here, again, he avoids the pitfall of egotism. He causes the main character to give the reader the necessary information as a sort of by-product of his interest. He doesn't cause him to say, "I am the great *I am.*" He shows him responding as all young men respond to their heroes. He shows him responding as such a man would respond. He knows that one of the weaknesses of the hero-narrator's angle is the unconvincingness of translated dialogue, so he avoids dialogue. Yet, plausibility of the main actor is sustained. He is not made perfect. He is by no means a sissy. He is guilty of human jealousy. He shows this reaction to the boy who threatens his means of livelihood. His resentment towards dudes is made clear. He is not above a certain crude, naïf display, when, flushed with whiskey, he hires a hack and sits in the grandstand. But Mr. Anderson takes care to let the reader know that this showing off is a sort of defensive armor of self-assertion. And, in the mellow glow of the whiskey and the consciousness of being well-dressed and presenting a good appearance, the hero philoso-

phizes in a convincing manner. And all the time that the reader is being made aware of these qualities in the hero, he is conscious of a growing feeling of pity for the man who is about to be plunged from this height of contentment into a position which causes him one of the "most bitterest" jolts he ever had to face.

All of the information contained in the explanatory matter is necessary to an understanding of the Main Situation of the story, the thing to be accomplished. And the teller of the tale, recognizing this in his naïf way, says apologetically, "I'm only telling you to get everything straight." It is all Beginning; but it is all interesting because Sherwood Anderson is a master craftsman. He knows that explanatory matter must be presented in such a way as to contain drama, and that drama is either the possibility of conflict or conflict itself. He knows, furthermore, that each such encounter is admissible only when it is necessary to an understanding of the character or of the happenings. Every word in the explanatory matter is needed. The story is well-constructed. It has a definite Beginning consisting of a main situation (something to be accomplished) and the Explanatory matter of setting, character, and involvements necessary to a reader's understanding of the importance of that situation. It raises a definite narrative question: "Can the main character win the girl's esteem?" The Body is made up of the action of the character as a result of that situation, and has definite crises which are furtherances and hindrances to the accomplishment of that object. It has a clearly defined Ending, containing both the decisive act which is the answer to the main narrative question raised by the main situation, and the effect upon the character of all the happenings. It contains a decisive act by which the character answers the main narrative question.

But excellent as is the structure of the story, structure is plotting. The supreme quality in this story comes from its presentation, whereby it gains its authenticity. It is a proof of the old contention that when you want a hero to tell a story against himself, you may cause him to use the first person. In

this story the hero tells a story against himself, but he does not, by so doing, lose the reader's sympathy. And throughout he lives. That is the mark of a real story: the character must live.

What to avoid: An examination of many stories told in the first person will show you that a writer often finds that the limitations forced upon him by adherence to this Angle of Narration limit him so severely that for the sake of plausibility he changes his Angle of Narration in the middle of the story, and produces a hybrid—a solution which he could have avoided, had he known in advance the quality of the different methods of narrating a story. It would have been better, for example, to have revised the Beginning so as to make it conform to the changed part and to have adhered, for the sake of unity, to one of the other Angles of Narration—that of the objective third-person dramatic observer, or that of the narrator who is not a hero, but merely a looker-on taking little or no part in the action.

The first-person narrator who tells about some one else's experience: This step from the limitations enforced by the hero-narrator's Angle of Narration to the utilizing of the narrator who takes a subordinate part in the action, or who takes no part at all, is the natural step. It frees you at once from many of the limitations imposed upon you by the employment of the hero-narrator. As regards Interest, the same considerations apply. Readers are interested in the teller of a story in proportion to their acquaintance with that person. When you have a series of stories to tell, you gain a distinct advantage by having them told, always, by the same person—for example, an old night watchman, as W. W. Jacobs does. There is, therefore, the possibility of a gain in Interest by substituting for the hero-narrator the narrator who is not the hero or who takes little part in the story which he tells in the first person, avoiding by his modesty the objection of the reader to egotism.

It is on the rock of Plausibility that you are likely to founder when it comes to using this Angle of Narration. You find

that the same sort of objections apply to it as to the Angle of Narration of the hero-narrator. The conversation must be rather limited, or it falls into the pit of formality, and becomes not conversation but writing, so that a strain again is placed on Plausibility. Everybody knows that ordinarily men do not talk as they write. This unimportant narrator must be a man of parts, able to bring out the subtleties of character, whether that character be a main character or a minor character. But this calls for artistry on the part of the writer in making plausible this man of parts. Yet, in using the unimportant narrator you have the tremendous advantage of being able to keep such a narrator in the background. Furthermore, such a narrator will add plausibility to the story in which another and central character may share the importance and the interest with the experience depicted; or even the chief interest may be in the character rather than the happenings, when such a character is working out some problem which is vital to him.

Where the angle of narrative is effective: Usually, stories told in this manner deal with a character at different crises of his career, the teller of the tale having had no opportunity to observe that character during the intervals between those crises. The unimportant narrator is a useful person to use as the teller of happenings garnered at different times from various sources. He can piece together many bits of information. He can, by narrating these happenings, throw light upon another happening which thereby assumes significance. In this connection, "Corputt," by Tupper Greenwald, which appeared first in the *Midland* and was later included by Edward J. O'Brien in the "Best Short Stories of 1924" (Small, Maynard & Co., Boston), is worth examination. A friend of Professor Corputt's, writing in the first person, tells about certain crisis in the Professor's life which explain the appearance of a copy of "King Lear" in the Professor's handwriting, found after his death. Plausibility is given by the fact that the narrator is the head of the English Department, with a literary gift. The gain in this choice of narrator is

that Professor Corputt, as hero-narrator, himself could not possibly have told the story; neither could a third person omniscient observer. Either would have been forced to disclose too soon the whole point of the story, which is that the Professor, brooding over his desire to write a play like "Lear," and having made a life study of the play, suffers from the hallucination that he is a great author. The play found at his death he had not copied; he had written it in the sincere belief that he had evolved it.

Examples of employment: Quantities of examples of stories told in the first person by unimportant actors are available; there are ten of them to one told by the first person hero-narrator. Wilbur Daniel Steele's story, "The Shame Dance," is an interesting example of the story told in this way. A sea captain tells of certain meetings with the main character. For a time he loses sight of the main character. Later he meets another man who has seen the main character since the captain last saw him, and who brings him up to date in regard to what has happened. This information the captain, as unimportant narrator, passes on to the reader in the first person.

An examination of countless good stories—good in the sense of being examples of first-rate utilization of material—has convinced me that the more a writer knows about the craftsmanship of his profession, the more he is able to evaluate and develop the inherent values of those ideas which occur to him as possibilities for stories. In this utilization of material, John P. Marquand's treatment of his story "The Spitting Cat" is a case in point, particularly as it illustrates an author's choice of an angle of narration.

The materials of a story determine, to a large extent, its treatment. "The Spitting Cat," like "I'm a Fool," is a story of accomplishment; the Situation is one calling upon the main character to accomplish something. Briefly, it is that the hero or main character, Pinckney Clew, has had his arm broken by Buddington Brent, who has been dismissed from school for so doing. He determines to avenge himself. The Beginning sets forth this Situation and its Explanatory Matter.

The reader knows what has happened, what is involved, and what is to be accomplished. This was the first series of happenings which Mr. Marquand had to present to his readers in order to give them the information that would illuminate the encounters which make up the Body of the story. The Ending of this story is a Contained Ending, as opposed to an Episodic Ending; that is to say, the Conclusive Act by which the Minor Narrative Question of the Scene is answered, is also the Conclusive Act which answers the Major Narrative Question of the Complete Story. The Minor Narrative Question of the Scene is "Can Pinckney succeed in overcoming Buddington in a duel?" The answer is "Yes." The Main Narrative Question of the Story is "Can Pinckney Clew succeed in turning the tables on Buddington Brent?" The answer is "Yes." The ironic significance of the whole affair is extracted by the author and presented to the reader in the lines that follow.

This plot situation, the succeeding series of meetings and the final conclusive act, with its significance, indicated through the effect upon the actors who took part in that encounter, form the irreducible minimum of material, no matter how presented nor from what angle of narration. The arrangement of these materials is a part of plotting. The artistic considerations do not enter ordinarily until after the plot is determined upon. By the plot, here, I mean the arrangement and order of the happenings which itself succeeds their selection. The artistic considerations are the angle of narration, the point of view, and the method of presentation. The method of presentation may be either in the words of the author or the words of the character, the requirements of interest demanding that in either case it be pictorial and dramatic; that is to say, that the pictorially presented meetings shall contain either the promise of conflict, or the conflict itself; that there is present either a conflict of forces, or the promise of difficulty, conflict or disaster.

Competent craftsmen in the short-story form are like competent craftsmen everywhere else. Experience has taught them that for different purposes there are different methods. The

words of the author are usually employed when the author is interested in showing a single person facing certain conditions, interesting only as forming a stimulus to which the character may react—the writer's intent being to illustrate by the character's reactions that character's personality. It is clear that except for a soliloquy by the character, speech is impossible when the character is confronted by a condition in nature or environment, or by some inanimate object, or by some inner force of his own nature at variance with his narrative purpose. The author's words are used when the stimulus is inarticulate. To use words of the author is the narrative method. To use the words of the character is the dramatic method. When, on the other hand, the writer is interested almost equally in two persons, and those two persons appear throughout the story, the dramatic method is ordinarily more desirable. Throughout this story, except in the introductory part ending with the words of the Marquis, "The big fool and the little fool," the presentation is dramatic. In those introductory lines the presentation is narrative because two people are not brought together. Beginning with the words, "It seems a long jump to get to the beginning," through to the end of the story, the presence of two forces demands, almost automatically, in the consciousness of the trained writer, dramatic treatment.

How the Material Dictates the Angle of Narration: It is clear that in a story demanding both narrative and dramatic treatment, the teller of the tale must be presented to the reader as a person capable of rendering material both ways. He must be a person capable of writing narrative convincingly and authentically. When, as in this case, the teller of the tale did not observe all the happenings, the problem of the writer is made very difficult. The teller of the tale must be made authentic. Mr. Marquand succeeds by identifying the author with the narrator. He does not cause the narrator to say in so many words that he is capable of telling this story professionally, but he implies it very adroitly by deploring the unfitness, as a skilled narrator, of Harry Robbins. Not only must the

narrator be shown to have the qualities of an author, but he must also have the capacity to render authentically, happenings at which he was not present. Those he renders in narrative, he must vouch for personally, at least by implication; but those he renders dramatically call for no such guarantee. Naturally, then, the encounters which occur in places at which the teller of the story was not present, he will render dramatically. This brings up for consideration a new element, the Point of View.

Choosing a Narrator is not the same as choosing the Point of View: Many writers fail to distinguish between the Angle of Narration and choosing the Point of View. In selecting an angle of narration, you select a person to tell your story. In selecting a point of view you select an *actor* who is usually the *main actor* whose *thoughts* you, as author, can analyze. It is obviously poor craftsmanship for an author to analyze the thoughts of a minor character. It is worse craftsmanship for one character to analyze the thoughts of another minor character in the story. In the hero-narrator story the Angle of Narration and the Point of View coincide. The teller of the tale is both author and main character. He can analyze his own thoughts—and does.

Where the narrator is not a hero, the main character is another person than the author; but the author, by establishing himself as a minor character, automatically limits himself and must forego the privilege of analyzing his hero's thoughts or anybody's thoughts but his own. One of the pitfalls into which the amateur writer stumbles in choosing as the angle of narration that of the narrator who is not a hero is that he will feel an instinctive desire to analyze the thoughts of the characters during the encounters. Yet, he cannot do this plausibly. And the very reason for choosing this angle of narration—its plausibility—disappears.

This preservation of plausibility is a grave problem. Its disregard frequently ruins an otherwise acceptable story. The amateur does one of two things. Either he tries a new angle of narration, or he swings into analysis of emotions and thoughts of which he could not possibly have been aware when

he was present. The professional knows better. For example, Mr. Marquand might have said that Buddy was perturbed, and have analyzed his thoughts and feelings. But he refrains from doing so. Instead, he says, "Harry noticed that Buddy looked toward the door and through the glass windows that faced the street." By doing this he kills two birds with one stone; he makes clear that this information came to him through Harry Robbins, and he succeeds in *showing Buddy's reactions pictorially,* without analyzing them. Where the amateur would have said, "Some similar observations were penetrating Buddy's mind," Mr. Marquand is careful to preface this statement with the word "evidently," and to follow it with the words, "for he looked, for the first time in the evening, cold sober." The teller of the story could have learned of this reaction of Buddy's from Harry Robbins. And so it goes throughout the story. Nothing is included in the way of a character's reaction which could not have been obvious to the teller of the tale after talking with Harry Robbins.

The choice of a narrator is determined for the author by two considerations: Interest and Plausibility. Usually, the gain is in plausibility. But Mr. Marquand uses the narrator here to gain in interest, which comes from importance and unusualness. The story might have started with the meeting of the two boys, but it would then have been only the ordinary quarrel of two boys at prep school, instead of being part of an epic as it becomes from the statements of the actor-narrator in the preceding lines. These statements might have been presented objectively by an author who had no part whatever in the story, but they would have lacked the interest they now have because, in the first place, they would be a clearly artificial introduction, and in the second place, the story would have lost greatly in authenticity.

The great gain of the author who tells his story in the first person, whether that person be the hero-narrator, or, as in this case, the narrator who is not a hero, is in Plausibility or Authenticity. If you once establish the fact that the teller of the story is a man of parts, with literary ability, all is well. The

narrator not a hero is desirable for the story which depends largely for the interest of the scenes upon the happenings. Wherever there are subtleties of character to be brought out it is undesirable; because subtleties of character demand for their interpreter a keen observer who has been able to view all the happenings and who has established his right to analyze a character's thoughts. But in a story such as "The Spitting Cat," the unimportant narrator is the choice of a competent craftsman, because there is a gain from such a choice in both Interest and Plausibility.

The aspiring writer will find exemplified in "The Spitting Cat" every step in the writing of a good story. It meets all the requirements:

> It has incidents which are well-selected and well-arranged. In other words, it is well plotted.
>
> Its style is pleasant, distinctive and readable. Therefore, well-presented.
>
> It has clearly defined and differentiated characters. Its settings are sufficient to give the necessary background and atmosphere.
>
> Besides being entertaining, it is significant; the reader being brought to the realization that from misunderstanding much enmity arises, and that once that misunderstanding is cleared up, the enmity disappears.

In regard to Style, Structure, and Significance, the story is worth studying. But, in addition to being Interesting and Plausible to readers, the story is interesting to students of the short-story form as illustrating a sureness of choice on the part of a competent craftsman in regard to the most effective choice of a narrator.

I have said that where the happenings are more important than the analysis of the mental reactions of the character, this Angle of Narration of the unimportant actor is desirable. But if there is one type of story to which the Angle of Narration of the unimportant narrator is especially fitted, it is the story in which it is essential to conceal some of the intermediate con-

temporary mental reactions of the main character. If the story were told by the hero, he could not conceal these reactions without being unfair to the reader; neither could the dramatic observer do so plausibly without exciting suspicion; he is supposed to know all about the character, this complete knowledge being his only warrant for telling the story. But the unimportant narrator can quite easily and naturally fail to observe certain reactions, or he can be in a place where those reactions were not within the scope of his vision, or he can be stupid enough to note the actions (which to an astute observer would have conveyed much) without understanding their significance. And so, naturally, when you want someone to tell your readers how Sherlock Holmes solved a certain problem, you select Dr. Watson, whose mentality is just the sort for your purpose. The detective story, the mystery story, the story in which part of the action is to be concealed, is the one where the desirable Angle of Narration is that of the unimportant narrator—these, and the story of a character's struggle, told by someone in a position to observe that struggle without bias, or the story of a series of crises in a character's life in which certain traits come inevitably to the fore. But this last might just as well be told by an omniscient observer, a third-person narrator. In fact, the third person narrator has the advantage of omniscience and the warrant to analyze the thoughts and feelings hidden from an ordinary observer.

The danger of the unimportant actor-narrator in rendering Settings: But there is always in this employment of a first person unimportant actor-narrator a certain danger. The narrator who is acute enough to see the subtle acts of character, astute enough to interpret the incidents, must also be stupid enough to miss the significance of many things. And always there is the necessity of his being capable of observing settings and translating them in terms of art. Here plausibility meets its test. So therefore, you are forced to the conclusion that Setting must be subordinate, unless you have a narrator of extreme sensitiveness and artistic perception, who has the capacity for translating his observation in terms of art.

As you proceed, you will see that the objections to the first two choices of a narrator, which are ordinarily the choice of a writer seeking the illusion of authenticity, are chiefly on the ground of their lacking plausibility; because their authors and actors are identical and, therefore, unable to interpret character except objectively; and as problem after problem presents itself, you encounter this barrier more and more. One thing you cannot do without awkwardness, certainly: you cannot have the hero-narrator tell of happenings which took place in two different places at the same time. Even though he knows of them both, in order to describe the one at which he was not present he must sacrifice the authenticity which comes from the assurance of the eye-witness. Whatever he knows must, of necessity, be at least second-hand. Mr. Marquand is one of the few writers who have been able to do this successfully.

The impartial third person narrator has most advantages and fewest disadvantages: After a weighing and considering of the first two methods of narration, and after you have arrived at a comprehension of their advantages and disadvantages, you come to the third method of narration, that of the impartial third person observer, the nameless author who is outside of the action, merely interpreting it. In the limitations and in the scope of this method you find most for your study. In its employment you find the greatest range of craftsmanship. It is the dramatic method, where the scene is in front of the reader, the characters acting out their parts, the story unfolding before the reader's eyes, the author merely adding his words when the demands of plausibility prevent the characters from doing it authentically. A character cannot say to an opponent, with any degree of plausibility, "I'm coming toward you in two swift strides"; but the author can say readily enough, "He reached his enemy in two swift strides," or, "In two swift strides he crossed the room to meet his enemy."

When can you use this method and to what effect? To discover that, you must test it, as you have tested the others, against the requirements of Interest and Plausibility.

In respect to Interest, certainly you lose little if anything, for

the reader is quite as likely to be interested in the manner or style of the writer who sets forth his story so dramatically and objectively, as in the personality of a hero-narrator or a narrator who has only a minor part in the action. Whatever loss there may be in interest may be certainly more than balanced by the opportunities for the explanation of character reactions that are presented. Balanced against this must be considered the loss of Plausibility, through sacrificing the authenticity of the first-person.

In authenticity, however, you lose only slightly, because the reader who takes up a story, by that very act admits that he is willing to read a fiction; his mind is prepared. If you can capture his interest and hold it, you will succeed. And once you succeed in enlisting his interest, your possibility of holding it is multiplied a hundred-fold by the third method, the dramatic presentation of the story by the author, who interpolates only such descriptions of places and characters' appearance and reactions as are necessary to a complete understanding of the action. This omniscient, nameless narrator, behind the scenes, scarcely ever apparent to the audience, directs the play. This, he says, is what happened; here is a situation confronting a character; there is a certain background necessary to an understanding of it; then he allows the players to take the bit in their teeth and run away with the action.

In telling a story objectively, you interpolate impersonally such description of Setting and Characters as will make that setting and those characters clear to your audience, simply that ghosts may not talk from the void. You add verisimilitude, the appearance of truth. You can do almost everything that can be done by the other two types of narrators. Nobody questions your right to describe the appearance of characters, either main or minor; you may portray any number of characters, all varied, all speaking differently, and nobody questions the plausibility of your treatment, provided you do it well. You are granted that privilege by the mere fact of being an author. Nobody thinks it strange that you should react to beautiful scenery or to ugly surroundings in a sensitive, artistic

fashion, and that you should have the capacity to translate your emotions in such a way as to arouse the same emotions in the minds of your readers. Nobody finds it strange that you should have all these capacities and possess at the same time the faculty of being a good raconteur, having the eclectic ability to select from life those incidents best calculated to cause in the mind of your reader the effect you wish. These are your rights and endowments as a craftsman. One thing only you must not do: you must not be unfair with your audience; you must lay your cards on the table. If you conceal something, the concealment must appear to be done by one of the characters, or a clue must be left for the reader, seeing which, in the light of later knowledge, he will admit he ought to have read deductively. The author must play fair.

All of these three methods have their advantages; each has a certain function to perform, which it performs better than one of the others. Yet, it is noticeable that as a writer progresses and grows in power, he almost invariably veers toward the objectively dramatic method, because therein he finds scope and freedom and a challenge to his craftsmanship and his artistic resources.

THE SPITTING CAT

By John P. Marquand

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Harry Robbins is the only one who knows from its first to its final phase the epic of Pinckney Clew and Buddington Brent, though, of course, everyone has heard rumors. In fact, if you went about at all that particular autumn in Boston, New York, or anywhere that the idle and more or less useless foregather, you must have encountered embroidered gossip. You must have encountered principals, too, if you were young enough and active, for they were moving about, forever moving. Cecelie Snow, fortunately the least important, would have been the hardest to find, for she was generally in some conservatory, where her bobbed head and quick smile had little competition and where the color of her eyes and dresses were brighter than the flowers.

But Pinckney Clew—you must have seen him, with that alert bearing that comes of a small figure with sensitive face, straight dark hair and delicate nostrils. He was the one who never gave a sign of anything being wrong. Buddy Brent was so obviously careless that anyone would have guessed he was trying too hard to be at ease. You wouldn't have overlooked him—he was generally in the crowd around the punch bowl or the cocktails, making loud noises, and swaying his one hundred and eighty pounds from one foot to the other while his blond hair shone above his smooth pink forehead.

On such an occasion—say, at one of those ever-recurring

coming-out parties—a look of anxiety sometimes would usurp the conventional happy expression of their host. You might even have heard him say to someone in a careful undertone: "Are you sure they're all right? It is my opinion it wasn't wise to ask them both."

"Of course they're all right!" That was always the answer. "They've been at the same places all this autumn." Yet those answers were too pat, like voices saying it would not rain when clouds obscured the sun.

Now it is curious to consider the people that fate selects to see things. Harry Robbins was the one of us who saw the end, the boy we used to call Fatty Robbins back at St. Joseph's, and Harry said himself he didn't appreciate all that was going on. He was just sitting in his chair and wishing he was safe in bed and anywhere but in Italy.

"Honest to goodness now," Harry always says, "I just sort of woke up. No, it wasn't what I had to drink. Now listen: The old duca was wheezing and coughing, lolling in one of those drinking places. What the deuce do you call them? They're cafés in French, but what the dickens are they in Italian?"

And there you have the trouble. Harry everlastingly wanders off and bemuses himself in details about cafés and chairs, and there he is—the only one who knows. Of course there were others, but they only saw the end of it—that scaly old sinner, the asthmatic old Duca de Mola, for instance; but who could tell what he really thought?

Who can tell, for that matter, what may happen in Florence in the spring when warmth comes to its narrow medieval streets?

Where else but in Italy and Florence can one imagine a wheezing, sated old nobleman standing today in his house and panting in execrable English:

"You say they're gentlemen—what? And it is quiet here—yes? And I can fix it—the Molas always fix—*perbacco!* Let them fight with the duel and swords then, the big fool and the little fool!"

II

It seems a long jump to get to the beginning; but there is enough spirit to carry you over, enough of something beyond mere flesh. Though one must go back fifteen years and across the ocean to one of those New England church schools, neither the time nor the space means much. It even seems, so strange are the tricks of years, that none of us was much different when we all went to St. Joseph's. Harry Robbins was just as fat and I was just as thin, and surely Pinckney Clew was as small proportionately and as nervously active, and Bud Brent as heavy and as insolently strong.

When Pinckney came up in the stage from the station, a wide-eyed pale boy whose knickerbockers kept slipping down his spindling legs, he had that stunned and hopeless look which new boys often have. Pinckney had come from Maryland with a sole-leather trunk and kid gloves and a little derby hat and two new bags of pigskin. Buddy Brent looked at them and grinned, and that was the beginning.

First Buddy grinned and then twisted his face into a simper. He had been standing with the other old boys on the lawn by the rector's study to watch the new boys come in. Even then Buddy Brent was half a head taller than the rest of his form and lank with a heavy-jointed ranginess.

"Where'd you come from, mommer's boy?" he asked.

Anyone could have known the way Pinckney felt. He had been told about the school and he wanted to do the proper thing.

"I come from Baltimore," he said, and added as though it was part of the answer, "I'm one of the Clews of Baltimore."

There was a titter, naturally enough. Already the boarding school was beginning its relentless work of casting Pinckney into that enviable mold known as the St. Joseph's boy.

"Who did you say you were one of?" asked Buddy.

"One of the Clews of Baltimore."

"Well," said Buddy, "I'm one of the Brents of Pittsburgh. Did you ever hear of the Brents of Pittsburgh?"

"No, sir," answered Pinckney.

"Did your mommer bring you here?"

A faint pink had come into Pinckney's cheeks, and his nostrils quivered, but he got no sympathy. His kid gloves and his derby hat were enough to dry up human kindness.

"Tell him," called someone. "New boys have got to answer."

Pinckney answered with a strained intensity, startlingly out of proportion to his meager build. "None of your business," he said.

"What's that?" Buddy thrust out his jaw and Pinckney spoke again.

"I won't be made fun of—not about that. My mother's dead."

"There," said Buddy. Everyone knew the thing pleased him, for Buddy was that conventional character, the bully of the school. "It's lucky you backed down."

A curious note came into Pinckney's voice. It was like a voice from space, a voice of someone talking in his sleep.

"I didn't back down," he said. "I'm not afraid of you."

Buddy laid hold of his shoulder. "You will be, though," he said.

And then the rector's door opened and the rector was standing on the steps of his study, a big man, red of face, with a low clerical collar.

"Here, here!" he said, staring at Buddy's hand on Pinckney's shoulder. "Here—what's this?"

But the rector knew without anyone's telling. He knew boys even better than his books.

"Don't lie now, Brent," he said. "You're bullying again, Brent. You're a despicable bully, and let me discover you just once more— Shake hands, sir, with the new boy and tell him you're sorry."

In Pinckney's face and Buddy's face there was something that was the same, not readily to be described, but so apparent that anyone could see; not stubbornness exactly, but a hardness, tempered by some internal fire. Naturally, any boy who was worth anything fought at St. Joseph's. When the time came it would be over in a minute, when one considered that Buddy

could have given Pinckney fifteen pounds; and yet the prospect made us nervous. The certainty of it put our whole dormitory on edge—the absolute knowledge of what would happen, combined with its not happening. Though sure as fate they would have to have it out, a month passed, and another month.

I remember the day when Pinckney and Buddy fought, even little details in it, such as make you wonder at the laws of remembering and forgetting. Pinckney and Harry and I were scratching with short sticks in the leaves at the base of the chestnut tree which grew behind the tennis courts, just where the fields slope in a gentle declivity from the school building, when Buddy heaved in sight. Pinckney saw Buddy first, and straightened quickly and dropped his stick. Buddy was rustling through the leaves, pleased apparently at the scuffling sound. A shadow fell across his face, diagonally from the edge of his jaw. Other shadows of bare twigs made a little grating across his jersey.

"Hi, mommer's boy," he said.

It was not a matter of words that made them fight. Pinckney was polite, like all the Clews of Baltimore, in words.

"Please don't call me that," he said.

"I'll call you anything I please," said Buddy.

Pinckney took off his Norfolk jacket. His arms were reedy; his neck wriggled loosely in his Eton collar, but his voice was what we noticed.

"No, you won't," he said.

Buddy laughed, but his laugh ended in a startled choke. Pinckney had gone for him, but not like other boys who do not know how to fight. He did not lower his head and wave his arms, but leaped straight at Buddy's face before Buddy had time to guard. Neither of them spoke. A trickle of blood ran from the corner of Buddy's mouth. He struck at Pinckney's white shirt, stepped forward, tripped him, and they rolled down together.

Buddy was on his feet, while Pinckney still sprawled on his hands and knees. The rest was a simple matter. Buddy drove his knee into the small of Pinckney's back, jerked him upward

and twisted Pinckney's right arm behind his back in a hammer lock, as Pinckney came up standing. Pinckney stood like a trussed fowl, breathing between his teeth, and Buddy jerked savagely at his arm.

"That'll teach you to mark my face!" gasped Buddy. "Say 'enough'!"

"No," said Pinckney.

Both Harry and I moved toward them. "Leave him alone!" we cried. "You're going to break his arm."

"If you won't say enough," said Buddy, "say 'I beg your pardon, grant your grace.' "

"Go on and say it," we suggested, but in those silent boys was some force beyond our scant philosophy.

"I won't say it!" Pinckney gasped. "Don't pull him away! I'm not afraid!"

His voice changed with the last words. Buddy gave his arm another wrench.

Somehow we could not move, but could only stand listening to Pinckney's quickened breathing.

"Go on!" said Buddy. "Say 'I beg your pardon, grant your grace' or I will smash your arm." A sharp cry burst from Pinckney's lips. "Ah," said Buddy, "did you say it?"

"No!"

And, just as I mentioned, both their faces were the same, though Pinckney's was grilled with pain and Buddy's red with sullen anger.

"Say it!" Buddy repeated.

Pinckney spoke at last. His voice was a low murmur: "I beg your pardon."

"Go on!" said Buddy hoarsely; his eyes glittered. "Say it all!"

"Grant your grace." Suddenly Pinckney's voice rose shrill and fierce and he added a final couplet of defiance. "And I hope the cat will spit in your face!"

"You will, will you?" cried Buddy. "There! I'll teach you to fool with me!"

A second later they were standing face to face and Pinck-

ney was looking very sick. His arm was dangling at his side.

We never knew how much the rector saw, but then we saw him standing looking at us beneath the brim of his black felt hat. "Here, here," he said, "what's this?"

Faintly but very distinctly Pinckney answered before any of us could speak. "Nothing, sir," he said. "We were just wrestling round."

The rector tapped his boot with his walking stick, knowing probably that none of us would tell.

"Brent," he said, "go to your room until I send for you; and you, Clew, and you two—I'll see you first."

The rector's study was lined with books. A cannel-coal fire was burning in the grate, but the shelves and crackling flames were all a part of ominous suspense.

"Now, Clew," said the rector, "what's the matter with your arm?"

"I just gave it a wrench, sir." Pinckney's eyes never left the rector's face.

"Is that all you want to say?"

"Yes, sir." Pinckney's voice sank to a faint murmur. "I was just—wrestling round."

Pinckney swayed. He would have fallen if the rector had not caught him. "Robbins," said the rector sharply "run to the infirmary! He's fainted."

But Pinckney had not fainted. As the rector lifted him to a couch he murmured something and the rector looked at me, puzzled.

"What's that?" he asked. "What is the boy saying? Go and tell Brent I wish to see him."

As I left I could still hear Pinckney's mumbled words:

"I beg your pardon, grant your grace
And I hope the cat will spit in your face."

And still that wretched juvenile couplet keeps on jingling.

III

There are two things about life which must strike everyone sometime. First, the whole past seems to contract into

a fleeting, hurried time; and second, nothing in that past—particularly, unpleasant parts of it—seems ever to be irrevocably finished. An older man would have known, known as sure as fate, the people would begin to talk some day. An older man would surely have known that Pinckney Clew and Buddy Brent would meet again.

We had been jovial all day, Pinckney Clew and I. It was easy to be merry in Pinckney's company after he got his degree at Harvard and his father had put him on an allowance of twenty thousand dollars a year. It was August in 1922 and we were motoring in Pinckney's car to the Nevilles' for a week, and the Horatio Nevilles always made you comfortable. They owned a whole promontory of land jutting into Casco Bay with a thirty-room house upon it, built along the lines of an Elizabethan manor, with tiled baths and boiling-hot water and a butler and two second men who could answer any bell in half a second. St. Joseph's seemed very far away.

Old Horatio Neville and Mrs. Neville were so frightfully correct that, once within their walls, it was impossible to think that anything overt could come to pass. And Pinckney was so correct, the sort of man that servants always speak of as a perfect gentleman, slender still, but gracefully slender, with the same straight black hair very carefully brushed, and clothes that fitted without obviously trying. Even at his wildest, Pinckney said the right thing and did the right thing always.

Two men at the hotel where we had luncheon shouted at each other across the table.

"Let's go out of here," said Pinckney. "I hate scenes. Let's get out—I'll pay the check."

Pinckney reached quickly for the check, which lay on my side of the table, laughing as I snatched for it. But as he leaned farther forward I was surprised to see a flicker of pain run like a wave along his delicate lips.

"My arm," he said—"it's my arm. It's all right now, but it hurts me sometimes still if I get it at just the right angle."

"Your arm?" I said. Pinckney pulled a silk handkerchief from his pocket carelessly—too carelessly.

"Don't you remember?" he asked, raising his eyebrows. "You were there."

Then it came back all in a flash. It seemed no time at all. Pinckney was looking at me and his dark eyes were very dark.

"I've never seen him since," he said. "Rather curious, isn't it— I should never have seen him since?"

Something about Pinckney's voice, some fixed quality in it, was like the grating of a carving knife which a waiter was sharpening in the corner. Pinckney let me pay the check, and there was no doubt how clearly, how very clearly, Pinckney Clew remembered.

Mrs. Neville was standing on the steps when we rolled in, and Mr. Neville, clean-shaven and heavy jawed, already in his dinner clothes. In a moment a man was working at our bags and another man from the garage was ready to take the car.

"You dear!" said Mrs. Neville, as Pinckney took her hand. "How nicely you look!" It was natural—there was not a hostess anywhere who was not half in love with Pinckney. "You dear!" said Mrs. Neville again; and added in a lower tone, "Cecelie Snow is here."

Cecelie Snow was standing in the dark high hall, smiling and talking and tossing her dark head, just as though she did not know or care that Pinckney was coming. And Pinckney even managed to look surprised, just as though he had not planned all summer to come to the Neville's to see her. They were both equipped to give no indication of a past or future, and certainly not of a present. Cecelie had known so many men, and Pinckney always did what was right.

"Think of that!" said Pinckney.

Cecelie smiled and then laughed, a rippling little laugh that seemed to light up all her face.

"Don't talk," said Mr. Neville. "Hurry and get dressed. Dinner's ready. How can we keep any servants with everybody late?"

"It's lucky," said Cecelie—her voice always had a quality of excitement in it which always stirred one's pulse—"that I brought another man along, isn't it?"

"Always better to have two," said Pinckney, "in case one of them gets hurt. You couldn't do without any."

"Hurry and get dressed," said Mr. Neville.

"You both know everybody, don't you?" said Mrs. Neville.

Pinckney always knew everyone. He looked at the guests in the hall. There was the younger Weeks boy and Sam Drew and Catherine Burling and the two Smythe girls from Philadelphia.

"Hurry and get dressed," said Mr. Neville. "Here comes Hendricks."

And then came Cecelie's voice straight as an arrow in the wind. "Here's someone he doesn't know," cried Cecelie. "He doesn't know my new boy friend."

"Why, of course," said Mrs. Neville. "I never thought. This is Mr. Buddington Brent—Mr. Clew. One of the Clews of Baltimore and one of the Brents of Pittsburgh."

There he was. He was moving forward, broad-shouldered and heavy, with his blond hair crisp and shining. His face had the old pink color of St. Joseph's, but the roundness had gone out of it into straighter lines. Pinckney had become perfectly motionless, so still that everyone looked at him. Buddy had stretched out his hand instinctively, but suddenly his forehead wrinkled almost to the roots of his hair.

"Haven't I seen you somewhere?" he inquired. "By Jove, I've got it!" He withdrew his hand slowly. "It's mommer's boy—the one who got me fired from school."

Mr. Neville seized Pinckney by the arm. "You'll have all night to talk," he said wearily. "Hurry and get dressed; it's dinner time. How can we keep any servants with everybody late?"

I saw the look on Pinckney's face, the flash, the twitching of his lips. If no one else noticed, at least I noticed the unconscious curling of Buddy's fingers.

"Think of that," said Cecelie, and laughed in that way that made your pulses beat. "He isn't just my boy friend now; they were boys together."

Pinckney was walking up the stairs. Hendricks, the butler, had come in with a tray of cocktails. Buddy picked up a glass. His hand was trembling so that the faint red liquid spilled on his heavy fingers.

A minute later, in one of those endless corridors leading past the Nevilles' guest rooms, I encountered Harry Robbins. He must have heard my voice, for he popped his face through a half-open door.

"Did they meet?" he whispered. "Did they——"

The pause following his last words was as good as a question and my silence as good as any answer. Harry put his hand uncertainly to his chin.

"We've got to get him away—right off," he whispered. "You see that. Do you feel the way I do? It might be yesterday—yesterday!"

From the hall downstairs, Cecelie Snow was laughing; but even with Cecelie to make it worse, it still might have been yesterday.

Yet we must have been the only ones who guessed, and down at dinner no one could have known that anything was wrong. There was not even the slightest hint of preoccupation in Pinckney Clew. Across the table from him, Buddington Brent and Cecelie were whispering together, but you would not have thought that Pinckney noticed, except for a single instant. It was just as dessert was over, as Mrs. Neville was looking about to give the signal—you know the lull that comes in conversation at such a time, so that the whole table is brought together.

We all heard Cecelie Snow's voice, vibrant and so unconsciously excited that it seemed a hint of wonderful things. "Well, then, are you coming in the spring?"

Buddington Brent finished his glass of Scotch and put it down decisively. "Who wouldn't," he asked a little thickly, "if you asked him?"

Cecelie gave a little shrug with her smooth white shoulders. "I'm asking everyone," she said.

It was one of those scraps of conversation without a beginning, but it had some meaning. Pinckney, who had been talking to one of the Smythe girls, laid his napkin on the table. "That's a new line," he said—"asking everyone."

Buddy Brent looked up slowly. "Perhaps she's changed her mind," he remarked in a way that made everyone look at him. "Didn't someone say it's a philosopher's consolation to know that women change their minds? The Clews of Baltimore ought to be philosophers—by this time."

Pinckney smiled. "Yes, sir"—he nodded courteously to Buddy—"we're stoics in Baltimore. The opportunists, I've found, generally come from Pittsburgh."

Mr. Neville began to laugh. One could tell from the hearty manner of his laughter that he could not understand the joke in the least. Others joined in nervously. Mrs. Neville had risen and the ladies were leaving the room.

Mr. Neville nodded to Hendricks, who nodded to the second man and picked up a tray of decanters. Then Mr. Neville, who never let a bit of form go by, nodded to Pinckney and waved his arm to the hostess's high-backed chair.

"Sit there," he directed amiably. "Then you won't need the long-distance to talk to Pittsburgh."

Sure enough there was no one between Buddy Brent and the chair which Mrs. Neville had quitted. As Hendricks moved forward with the decanters Harry seized my shoulder.

"Hurry and sit between 'em—both of us. Look! Will you look at the way they look?"

"Here!" cried Mr. Neville. "You two—come over here by me."

And we came and sat on the edge of our chairs. Mr. Neville began telling one of his stories which must emanate from English smoking rooms, and savor of Dickens and Scott and Thackeray all gone a little wrong. "There was a party up in Dorsetshire going to shoot over Lord Twombley's coverts—Are you listening, you two?"

"Oh, yes, sir," said Harry. "That is——"

From the other end of the table words were wafted toward us over the click of glasses. "Just what," said Buddy Brent, leaning forward, "did you mean by 'opportunist'?"

Pinckney waved away a glass of brandy. "Anything you want me to mean—anything at all."

There was a pause. Mr. Neville was continuing about Lord Twombley, who was arranging his guests for the night. Pinckney and Buddington Brent sat examining each other in critical silence.

"And he gave Fitzhugh the blue room," said Mr. Neville. "Do you get it? And Lady Percy had the one next, and in the morning—what do you think Lady Percy said?"

We didn't know; we didn't care. Pinckney was speaking again. A cup of coffee had fallen on the floor.

"May I inquire just why you made that last remark?"

It might have been yesterday—his voice was just as we remembered it, his face was just the same.

"I made it"—Buddington was speaking—"because you snitched on me and got me fired from school."

Pinckney's nostrils quivered. He seemed to be living that moment over again.

"You're mistaken," he answered. "I never said a word."

Their voices were lost for a moment as Mr. Neville chuckled. "And when Lord Twombley said in the morning, 'How did you sleep, Lady Percy?' what do you think she said?"

He stopped. We all stopped. Buddy and Pinckney were on their feet.

Hendricks was standing motionless by the sideboard. Tommy Weeks and Sam Drew were half out of their chairs, leaning over the table, and Buddy Brent was speaking thickly:

"You did do it! How could the rector know if you didn't tell? You fixed it! Don't be a liar about it now!"

Pinckney answered at once. His voice was level, but endless like the wind, not like his voice or any voice: "Don't call me that!"

Buddington's fingers clenched together. "You don't like it, eh?" he said. "Well, it fits you just the same."

The next instant, before we could speak or round the table, Pinckney staggered backward from a blow. He staggered, tripped on the carpet, snatched at the tablecloth, and was down in a heap of glass and cups, but he was up in half a second. Tommy Weeks, who tried to hold him, went crashing into the sideboard, sending half the silver toppling.

For a second there was perfect silence except for Buddington's deep sobbing breath. Then Hendricks spoke in answer to a glance from Mr. Neville. "It's all right, sir. The ladies didn't hear. I closed the door, sir, when I saw it coming."

Yes, Hendricks was the one who kept his head. He was the one who got a napkin and began bathing Pinckney's face. Buddy cleared his throat nervously and Mr. Neville spoke:

"Good with your fists, aren't you?"

"I'm sorry, sir," said Buddy between deep breaths. "I didn't mean—to do it."

"You made a damn good mistake then, didn't you?"

"He's coming round, sir," said Hendricks.

Mr. Neville nodded and stared at Buddy coldly. "In fact," he said icily, "you know how to use your fists rather better than hospitality. Be quiet—the rest of you! I saw it all—I heard! You insulted a guest, a friend of mine, as though you were in a barroom—a boy half your size. He was right to slap your face. I should have. Anyone would."

Buddy coughed, but he did not look away. "Mr. Neville," he began, "I can't help what size he is."

"No," said Mr. Neville evenly, "and you can't help a lack of self-control that makes you hardly fit—excuse my being so frank—hardly fit for decent company. Hendricks have Mr. Brent's bags packed and a car at the door."

"He's all right now, sir," said Hendricks. "Easy—easy Mr. Pinckney."

Pinckney sat up on the dining-room carpet, mechanically rubbing his jaw, and Buddy Brent's own jaw hung slack.

"You're not," he gasped—"Mr. Neville—you're not going to—kick me out?"

"You catch my meaning perfectly," said Mr. Neville, "though you paraphrase it in your own blunt way."

Pinckney struggled to his feet and gripped the edge of the disordered table.

"Please," he said slowly, "don't do that. It was my fault. I'm sorry, sir. I really began it and neither of us could help it. It just happened—about something. We'll be all right after this. Shall we go in now?"

Even Mr. Neville looked relieved after Pinckney spoke.

"Well——" he began.

Buddy moved a step toward Pinckney. "I just want to say," he said, "in spite of the way I feel—I want to say——"

Pinckney's voice was like ice, his eyes like ice. "Don't say it," he begged. "Say it sometime later, sometime when we aren't guests in someone's house. I feel the way you do—the way I always did, only perhaps a little more. And I won't always be laid out like this on the carpet. Please remember that."

There were five of us besides Buddington Brent and Pinckney Clew, not one of whom would have breathed a word intentionally, as old Horatio Neville must have known, for he did not bother to remind us.

"It doesn't seem possible," he remarked, "but the world's a deucedly incredible place. Everyone will hear about it. It's going to come out and stand out—like a red woolen union suit on washing day—entirely without words."

IV

No, it wasn't words. It was Pinckney Clew and Buddington Brent, not words. The sight of them was enough to make old ladies whisper and men to emit low whistles, and they seemed to persist in being seen together after that on purpose and by mutual consent. The Brents, one heard, had made a pile of money, and naturally Buddington began to be invited everywhere; and, of course, Pinckney Clew had always

been invited. It was not their faces or their manners which made people talk, but something behind all that which left no need of words to tell that something lay between them.

An older man would have prophesied that Cecelie Snow was bound to find it out. But a month went by and another month, and still Cecelie did not know. In spite of questions people were asking which were growing more difficult to answer, anyone could tell that Cecelie did not know. Then everyone was talking. There seemed to be no reason why, but suddenly rumors of that night in Mr. Neville's dining room were everywhere.

At the coming-out dance of the younger Burling girl, Pinckney Clew was standing in the stag line when an event occurred which could not escape attention. Cecelie Snow walked straight across the floor to him, unescorted.

"I want to dance," she said. "Do you hear me? Hurry, if you don't want everyone to talk. Dance with me to the door. There's something I want to say."

Fifteen minutes later, as Harry Robbins and I were standing near the coat room, Pinckney Clew appeared. His face was white as paper and he was walking up the stairs, looking straight before him.

"Have you seen Brent?" he asked. "Answer me. Where's Brent?"

"Why?" Harry started. We both started. Pinckney was trembling as though he had a chill.

"Oh, you know why! Here! Let me go, you two! I want to see Buddington Brent."

We both answered at once as we each held him by an arm.

"No, you don't, Pinckney. What is it, Pinckney?"

"Thanks," he said at length; "I'm much obliged to both of you. I'm all right now. Get my coat, will you? I want to go home."

We were in a taxicab, going down Fifth avenue. Its asphalt, with the lights on it, had the glow of a ballroom floor. Again we were speaking almost in a chorus.

"What's the matter? Don't keep everything to yourself—tell us what's the matter."

Pinckney gave his handkerchief a little flick. "You're—both of you—the most egregious asses, or else you'd know. It's Cecelie."

"Cecelie?"

Pinckney stared at the lights as they moved by one by one.

"She's heard about that curtain raiser in Neville's dining room, and I know who told her about it. Oh, I know, and she wouldn't listen to a thing I had to say. She threw me over—just like that."

Then we were in Pinckney's rooms. Pinckney tossed his silk hat toward a chair, and we watched it roll off and bounce across the floor. Pinckney pressed a bell.

"Bring these gentlemen whisky and pack my bags."

"Your bags, Pinckney? Where are you going?"

Pinckney picked up his hat. "I'm getting out of this," he said. "Don't you see why? This town isn't big enough—no town is big enough to hold Cecelie and Brent and me."

Harry's face was white and mine must have been white.

"I'm going after him," Harry whispered. "If someone doesn't——"

"If someone doesn't——"

"He'll kill him—he'll kill him! Did you see the way he looked?"

V

Though Harry is the one who tells the rest in his own vague way, frequently launching off into side channels until he seems like a lecturer delivering a travelogue, it is possible to catch a hint of his anxiety. It is possible, through his talk, to catch a glimpse of Harry himself, hurrying to banks in Paris, sitting solid and disconsolate at places where Americans gather, asking questions, always asking questions, though no one could tell him what had become of Pinckney Clew. You see, he had some intuition denied to the rest of us, or he knew more about Pinckney Clew than the rest of us, but when he

tries to explain what he knew he only repeats: "I saw his face—I saw his face—that's all."

When he tries to explain what led him to Italy and finally to Florence, he falls into that same slough of vagueness, which perhaps is just as well, for nothing happened until he got to Florence, and then, all of a sudden, everyone was there. To judge from Harry's telling it, all was like a miracle perfectly designed in every way to make everything unpleasant.

Harry was sitting in that large hotel, perhaps the largest of them all that fronts the Arno. It had the architectural characteristics of all Continental hostelries, a rotunda with glass doors, palm trees and little tables, a small writing room, and the usual desks and chairs. It must have been five in the afternoon—Harry said it was five, because it was still light; and the days were not very long, since it was only the middle of March—when Harry became aware of a bustle by the glass front doors, the closed motor drawn up to the curb; and, with that sense of drama and volubility which comes only in a southern race, the hotel porters were rushing toward it, fighting their way through a crowd of urchins. First there came a courier with well-greased curls, who was met by the maître d'hôtel, still carrying one of his endless bills with its addition left unfinished. Next, three men in aprons staggered in under suitcases and hatboxes, and then Harry started from his chair. Two American women in sables, one young and one old, walked into the rotunda. They were Mrs. Snow and Cecelie Snow.

Cecelie might have been walking into the Plaza instead of wandering into a strange and vocal land. There was the same vague excitement in her motions, the same half-inquisitive, half-amused way of turning her head, but it seemed to Harry that Cecelie looked paler. It was difficult, however, to know what she was thinking, for Cecelie was too finished to show her feelings. It only seemed to Harry that Cecelie looked startled when she saw him and wished to conceal from him why she was startled.

"Well, of all things?" she said. "To think of you two being here!"

"Which two?" asked Harry.

"You stupid!" said Cecelie. "Why are you always stupid? You and the other one! Everyone knows you came all the way over here to find Pinckney and hold his hand."

"Well——" began Harry slowly.

"Don't be a dunce," said Cecelie almost angrily. "Isn't Pinckney here?"

"Don't worry," said Harry, annoyed at being called a dunce, "there won't be any painful scene. He isn't here."

"Don't be so cross," said Cecelie. "I'm so awfully tired. Where is he, if he isn't here?" All at once her lips began to tremble and Harry became alarmed. "And why hasn't he written me?" she asked. "Why do you suppose he didn't?"

"I understood you ought to know," said Harry.

He wished she would hurry and go upstairs, for he felt most uncomfortable.

"Please," said Cecelie, "please don't be so cross. I wrote and I should think he might, if he had any sense. Is he all right? Where is he?"

"I don't know," said Harry.

Why was her voice growing higher? Why was she nodding her head at him and plucking at her gloves? The guests in the rotunda were looking at them curiously.

"I really don't know," said Harry. "I've been looking for him everywhere and I haven't been able to find him."

"You haven't been able——"

She looked younger than he had ever seen her; but suddenly she turned away and hurried toward the golden elevator, with its boy in gilded buttons, while Harry stared after her, his broad face bewildered. But one thing was certain—Cecelie had not forgotten Pinckney Clew.

Though there was no reason to be excited, the sight of Cecelie appearing suddenly had made Harry feel very strange. There seemed to be shadows behind the palm trees. Old ghosts were stirring from that Hades where restless ghosts dwell;

in spite of an ocean separating them, he could hear their voices in that garish, comic-opera rotunda.

The voices of St. Joseph's and the sounds of Mr. Neville's dining room mingled with the pattering of porters' footsteps. Another car had drawn up at the door, to the chorus of new Italian exclamations. The maître d'hôtel again appeared from behind his desk, and for a second time Harry started in his chair. Two men, two new arrivals, entered the rotunda.

The first he had never seen. He was an old man in a fur-lined overcoat leaning on a cane. A high silk hat was tilted on his heavy head and his face was round and very white, a sort of caricature of a face that a child might draw. Folds of flesh on his cheeks and chin undulated with his short stertorous breathing, and his eyes, watery and colorless as his face, stared about him vaguely. Once he caught sight of him, the maître d'hôtel rushed up, bowing, almost cringing; but Harry scarcely noticed. It was the second visitor Harry was watching. He knew the broad shoulders beneath the leather motor coat before he saw the pink, glowing face. It was Buddington Brent.

"See!" gasped the old man in halting English. "I spit upon the place! Why do you stay here when I offer you my house and—what you call it—fun?"

Buddington shrugged his heavy shoulders contemptuously. "You know damn well why I'm staying here," he answered. The ghosts were back. Their voices were in the familiar sound of Buddy's voice, and they must have been in Harry's too, for Buddy exhibited all his ancient truculence. "What the devil are you doing here?" he cried.

"Isn't this a public place?" asked Harry.

Buddington made no direct answer except to bite his lip. "Where's Clew?" he asked.

"Don't worry," said Harry, "he isn't here." And still it was the same, a hint was still enough.

"Why the devil should I worry?" demanded Buddington. "It's only lucky for him he isn't. I'm just asking you a civil question. Didn't you come over here to find him?"

Nevertheless, it seemed to Harry that Buddington was relieved, for he added in a different tone: "Why are we always fighting? I've tried to tell him I was sorry. Why do you say I ought to know why he left New York? It's all over and done with, and I don't want to keep quarreling. Why, I'm the happiest man in the world!"

"The happiest?" Harry faltered and grew weak. He had actually felt from what Cecelie had said that things might straighten out, but now he could guess the answer.

"And the luckiest. I'm engaged to Cecelie Snow."

A dozen things that Harry had to say, as a friend of Pinckney Clew's, were lost and useless. He was standing in the lobby shaking hands with Buddy Brent before he knew what he was doing. While his mind still reeled without recovering, he heard another voice beside them, wheezing and panting.

"Ah! You have found the friend? What the devil! Will you introduce?"

It was the fat old gentleman, who waddled toward them and was blinking his colorless eyes.

"The Duca de Mola," said Buddington and looked somewhat apologetic. "You've heard of the duca, haven't you? Most Americans have."

"Pleased to meet you," said Harry, again before he could think, because he was not pleased. It was difficult to be pleased with anything about the duca, though the duca was most cordial.

"It is a pleasure, always the pleasure," wheezed the duca. "I am old—ah-ha—near dead—I always like the young men—yes? Shall we speak French? Ah, you understand? When one is old, one likes the young men best—to see them happy, to see them drink and game. Ah, it makes me young, and Brent he makes me very young. And now you shall be the old man's guest—oh, yes, and we shall dine. You will come?"

Harry searched hastily through his French for an adequate refusal.

"Of course he'll come," said Buddy hastily; and added in a whisper, "Come, for heaven's sake! I can't shake the con-

founded old reprobate and I've promised. Look at him. You've got to come, and we'll get away the first chance."

Harry's mind was still in confusion, and what happened next was too mixed for his other thoughts to remember. The duca's bleary eyes glistened with a somewhat pathetic pleasure as they climbed into a victoria drawn by a decrepit yellow horse.

"Ah," said the duca, "now I'm young again when I'm with the young. You call the pleasure vicarious—what? Still it is the pleasure. Ah, now we can find more friends."

In spite of uneasiness and dislike, one could not help but be diverted at the duca's talk and at certain stories of dubious adventures that flowed easily from the duca's lips, and at the friends the duca found. A long time later, it must have been quite late at night, Harry was actually laughing and pounding on a small round table, transported from the world he knew, surrounded by men with small mustaches and curious clothes and by officers in long cloaks of horizon blue.

His brain was whirling with French, Italian, and champagne. They were all in a café, with himself and Buddy sitting in the center. As the party became noisier, Harry noticed that Buddy looked toward the door and through the glass windows that faced the street.

"Confound it," he kept murmuring, "we've had enough, haven't we? We've got to get out of this before it gets too rough."

Buddington had started to rise, Harry remembered that, because Buddy was seated opposite him. Buddy was on his feet, when suddenly he stood still and made an involuntary motion that made the glasses clatter, but only Harry followed Buddy's glance. Pinckney Clew, as though he had come from nowhere as people do abroad, was walking across the marble floor.

It was a sight that made the wine which Harry had consumed and the vision of men around them, in varnished shoes and spats, float from him like morning mist at sunrise. At least it made him realize that he had taken far too much. Evi-

dently some similar observations were penetrating Buddy's mind, for he looked, for the first time in the evening, cold sober.

People at the small tables watched Pinckney curiously as he passed, and waiters, without knowing him, bowed and stood back as waiters always did. Pinckney was neat as always, perfectly dressed in a dark suit with little stripes, and very polite. Nevertheless, something made Harry's brain and eyes as clear as a brand-new camera plate.

"I saw his face," says Harry. "I saw his face—that's all."

The talking had stopped, the duca had stopped laughing; but before Buddington or Pinckney could speak, Harry lurched forward and got Buddington by the arm.

"Don't!" he cried hoarsely. "Sit down! Don't be a fool!"

That indefinable current which is a premonition of trouble went in little waves through the whole café, so that even the eyes of the duca were less bleary.

"Sit down!" cried Harry again, tugging at Buddy's arm. Buddington was trying to say something; he coughed and cleared his throat, and, leaving Buddy, Harry made a grab at Pinckney's sleeve.

"It's a friend of mine," he said loudly. "I'm walking back to his hotel with him. Good night."

"And you go home?" the Duca de Mola started up with an indignant bellow, lumbering forward, stumbling over chairs and legs. "You go home because he is your friend? Not by ten thousand devils! You all go home with me." A fit of coughing choked him, making his whole body shake, and he seized his stick and hat. "We sit up all night at my home. You, signorino, I know the sport when I see him. Will you not come?"

Buddington laughed heavily and the motion from Pinckney made Harry grasp him more firmly.

"He can't come," said Harry hastily.

But what could Harry do more than that? He never realized he had done the very thing calculated to start the ball rolling.

"I can still go any place I like," said Pinckney. "Why can't I come?"

The party had been gathering around them, and Pinckney's remark was met by a shout of approving laughter. The duca began slapping Pinckney's back and snatching for Pinckney's hand; and Pinckney, even as he tried to avoid the handshake, whispered in Harry's ear, "Do you think I'll let him think I'm afraid? I'll be damned if I will—damned!"

Inevitable—that was the way it always seemed, as though the time and place and everything had been worked out long ago. The duca dwelt where his fathers had dwelt, in one of those huge stone buildings, old, yet reminiscent of Fifth avenue today except for a prisonlike solidness and prisonlike gratings on the lower windows. A servant opened the front door, which he clanged behind them, once everyone was in the courtyard and shivering slightly. Harry followed the laughing, noisy men up a flight of broad stone steps into a huge room. The room was so large that it was like a dream, and, despite the lights upon the walls, it stretched into shadowy space. A half-dozen servants were making things ready, as though they had done it often, placing bottles and glasses upon a huge table and kindling a fire, for the room was very cold.

In spite of the chilliness, however, the duca was warm with wine, so warm that his white face was a gray pink; and just as Harry espied Pinckney Clew and Buddington standing with a little group of men, the duca waddled toward him, panting and chuckling.

"Your friend he is so nice!" he gasped. "I love him. He makes me laugh fit to die! Ah, those boys, how they make me young!"

"Let go of me!" cried Harry. "I've got to be with them. Don't you see what's happening?"

The duca had thrown an arm around Harry's shoulders and held them as though he were anchored. "No!" he shouted. "We take the wine. Ah, you do not drink like those nice young men!"

"Let go of me, you old devil!" roared Harry. "Look at 'em—don't you see?"

The duca turned and looked, which was not strange, for everyone had begun to look.

"Ah," cried the duca, "so that is it! Boys will be boys. Ah, now we have—what you call it—fun!"

Pinckney Clew, with his straight dark hair, and Buddington Brent were in the center of a little circle. "What is it?" wheezed the duca. "What is it they are saying?"

"Let me go!" gasped Harry. "Won't someone get between them?" Anyone could hear what they were saying.

First there was Buddington's voice: "I tell you it won't do any good to stay here!"

"Do you think"—it was Pinckney, as polite as ever—"I'm not able to decide what does me good?"

Buddy picked up a glass of Orvieto. "I can tell you it won't, just the same. I said it was too late, because I'm engaged to Cecelie Snow."

Through the wine fumes and the tobacco their voices were just the same. The temper, that ungodly force inside of Pinckney Clew, flashed into his face, but he did not move a muscle.

"Pinckney!" shouted Harry, struggling with the duca's arm, but Pinckney's voice continued evenly: "That's like you, absolutely like you, to drag her name in here."

"Ah-ha!" cried the duca. *"Cherchez la femme*—it is always so when you are young."

Buddington's voice was trembling. "I can look after that without your help. Now take care—I've stood enough. I tell you, it's all over!"

Pinckney took a cigarette case from his pocket, selected a cigarette and lighted it. "Exactly," he answered. "It's all over, because I'm engaged to Cecelie Snow myself."

Buddy tried to laugh, but his laughter sounded more like a roar of anger. "Rubbish!" he shouted. "What's the use in bluffing? You're always bluffing."

"You're mistaken," said Pinckney evenly. "I called at her

hotel this evening. Why should that surprise you? I traveled a long way to do it. Didn't you say once it's a woman's right to change her mind?"

"Touche!" roared the duca. "Ah, don't make me laugh so! Ah, but this is capital!"

Everyone, the officers, the dark civilians, began to laugh as though it was very capital. That was enough to finish it —more than enough. All the spleen that lay between them came like a wave into Buddy's cheeks and choked his voice.

"You sneak!" he shouted. "So that's what you've been doing—waiting till I was out and cutting in behind my back!"

"What's that?" demanded Pinckney. His voice also had risen. "Do you call me a sneak? After I saved you from being thrown out of decent society? How dare you to call me that when you lied behind my back?"

"What did I do?" Buddy Brent stepped backward as though a weight had struck his chest.

"You lied," repeated Pinckney. "You lied to her, you know it, about knocking me flat on my back in Neville's dining room."

And then Buddy was the calmer of the two. "I never did," he answered. "I never said a word. You don't think—of course, I never did."

Pinckney dropped his cigarette on the tile floor. If he had only thought, but he could not, for he remembered too much else and his blood had run too high.

"Of course not," said Pinckney softly. "Cowards are always liars—especially the Brents of Pittsburgh."

The next instant he was coughing. The Orvieto wine was in his face.

The wine which struck Pinckney's face was the reason for what happened next—there was too much wine. Two of the duca's guests laid hold of Pinckney, while Buddy stood alone, with trembling fingers. The duca had released his hold on Harry to waddle forward in a horribly sprightly way until he was beside Pinckney Clew. There was a chattering of Italian, with the duca's voice rising above it.

"Ah, what boys! It makes me young. And now you wish to fight? Of course, you wish to fight. Benito—hey, Benito, bring the swords!"

Now who can blame Harry for thinking the duca was joking? The duca was patting Buddy Brent affectionately.

"Ah, you have come to the right place. Mola can always fix any little unpleasantness, and we are gentlemen—all gentlemen together, who will never tell. Benito, the dueling swords. Ah-ha!"

Then everyone was shouting at once, with voices that had the note of voices around a prize ring. "Bravo, for the duca! Now there's a jolly fellow!"

They were pushing back the table, clearing away the chairs. The two men who held Pinckney were leading him aside and helping him off with his coat and vest. For a moment Buddy and Pinckney both had the same incredulous look. A servant had come through the door, holding two instruments of polished steel with bell-shaped guards, not fencing foils with buttons, but two rapiers oddly like the swords of Dumas' musketeers. Their points glittered in the lights and Buddy called out in a voice that was very strange. "Clew!" he called. "Clew!"

Then the stupor which had held Harry quiet vanished. He hurried to the duca's side.

"You're joking, aren't you?" he asked.

"Ah-ha!" the duca nudged him playfully in the ribs, without listening to his question. "Now we see the sport, what? Do not be worried. I can arrange."

"But see here," cried Harry, "you don't understand!"

The duca favored Harry with an owl-like stare. "You say they are gentlemen—what?"

"Of course they're gentlemen."

"Then they will meet, naturally, after wine in the face. Why not now?"

"But you don't understand," repeated Harry. "They don't know how to use swords."

"You are joking!" the duca chuckled. "All gentlemen can use the sword."

"Well, these can't." It seemed to Harry that his wits were leaving him. "You've got to stop it. Do you hear me? Stop it!"

The duca fell into a fit of coughing. His voice came pantingly, punctuated by his coughing.

"You say they are gentlemen—what? And it is quiet here —yes? *Perbacco!* Give them the dueling swords, the big fool and the little fool."

The sight of these swords made Harry sick, resolving the whole procedure into a blur of words and strange formality.

Pinckney Clew and Buddington Brent kept staring at each other, like somnambulists, and once Buddington shook his blond head as he pulled his heavy shoulders out of his jacket. A gentleman with carefully plucked and penciled eyebrows offered Buddy a sword, which Buddy seized like a man in a trance.

"Clew!" he called again. "Clew!"

"The devil!" exclaimed someone. "The big one is afraid!"

If Buddy had hesitated, that was enough to send him rushing on. "Afraid? Damn it, don't you see I want to begin?"

"But it's murder!" Poor Harry Robbins had found his voice again. "Are both of you crazy? Stop it—for God's sake, stop!"

Pinckney Clew walked toward him, his arm bared to the elbow and his shoulders beneath his silk shirt had that familiar reedy look. His straight hair was so disordered that small moist locks of it drooped over his white forehead.

"Do be quiet," he said to Harry. "We can't back out now in front of these——" He shrugged his shoulders. "Of course we're both damn fools, the biggest there ever were, but we can't stop."

Harry could understand. Naturally, they had too much pride to stop—for either to show the other or those excited strangers that he was afraid, or to give the slightest hint. It

was a legacy of years that was bearing its final fruit. A silence had come over everyone except for the duca's wheezing breath.

"Wh-what's the matter?" asked the duca. "Is not everything quite ready?"

"Just a minute," said Buddy hoarsely. "I just want to say——"

They knew enough to take the position of guard, probably because they had both watched fencers. The man with the penciled eyebrows, who was adjusting their swords with mathematical exactness, looked up and frowned.

"I just want to say——" Buddy stammered, but Pinckney stopped him.

"Don't say it!" he cried. "Aren't we fools enough already? It's too late for either of us to say anything."

Too late—Harry knew what Pinckney meant. It had always been too late. Not the memory of Cecelie Snow was setting their faces, nor of Mr. Neville's dining room. The expression on their faces, or behind them, had been there at St. Joseph's. And now their swords were crossed, and they stared at each other uncertainly.

"The devil!" cried someone. "They do not even know the fence! Stop, before one is killed!"

Now why anyone should have thought they were familiar with swordsmanship Harry could never explain. Probably the duca and the others in that room thought there would be a few passes, a touch on the arm, a reconciliation. But, everyone knew it was no laughing matter, in a law-abiding country, when tyros handle sharpened swords.

"No, you don't!" cried Pinckney Clew. "It's too late to stop us now."

It was horrible because it was so ludicrous, the grating swords, their clumsy motions. Harry saw two officers exchange glances, separate and start cautiously toward the fencers, but they were not in time. Some expression of Buddy Brent's, a flicker of his eye or a twist of his lip, made Pinckney spring forward, throwing his whole body out of line.

There was a shout from the duca and a sound of sharply indrawn breath. Buddy Brent had hardly moved. Probably without intending, his sword had pierced Pinckney's left shoulder. What happened was too fast to follow and impossible to stop.

"The devil! He will kill him!" shrieked the duca.

Both Pinckney Clew and Buddington Brent were standing motionless. Buddy's rapier was still in Pinckney's shoulder. Pinckney's weapon had crossed Buddington's guard and hovered half an inch from Buddington's throat. No one dared to move or speak. Pinckney's voice was alone, rising in curious exultation.

"I knew," he said. "I always knew"—his shoulder must have hurt him, for he gave a gasp—"I'd get you some day."

Buddy Brent's mouth fell open as he stared at Pinckney Clew. They both seemed to have forgotten where they were—the whole present was obliterated by an older passion. Clearly through that room came Pinckney's voice.

"Do you remember school?"

Without a word from Buddington, his startled look made it clear that he remembered.

"Say 'I beg your pardon.'" It was Pinckney's voice again, eager, insistent.

Now was there ever a sillier thing than that? Was there any wonder that Harry gasped? Buddington stared at Pinckney Clew, but it was clear that he remembered.

"Take away that—damn sword!" he gasped. "I'm sorry that I struck you."

"Say 'I beg your pardon,'" Pinckney did not appear to have heard him.

"I'm sorry about everything," said Buddy hoarsely. "Clew—won't you stop it, Clew? I won't eat humble pie here. I didn't tell Cecelie anything. If she wants you—instead of me—I don't know. Maybe you're the better man. Now isn't that enough? Drop that thing!"

"Say 'I beg your pardon,'" repeated Pinckney. "You made me say it once."

A spot of blood had appeared on Pinckney's shirt, but he was held fast in some spell, both he and Buddy Brent. It was startling, uncanny, to think that a November day at St. Joseph's had lingered all that time, that Pinckney Clew had always waited and that the memory of it should come winging back.

Buddy cleared his throat. He was not in a pleasant position. "I beg your pardon," he said. "Now that's enough—Clew, you're going to faint. Put down that confounded sword."

That stubbornness, or something transcending stubbornness, had not left Pinckney, but lighted his whole face. "Say 'I grant your grace.' "

A cry came from Buddy, hoarse, almost incoherent. "I'm damned if I will, you little devil! I——"

"Say it!" said Pinckney.

Buddy hesitated and then spoke. "Grant your grace!" he shouted. Then all the defiance, everything that was between them, flared into sudden flame. "And I hope the cat will spit in your face!"

If Pinckney had remembered, Buddy had remembered, too; all of it had been always on his mind. Pinckney staggered slightly, looked incredulous.

"The cat?" Pinckney murmured like someone in a dream. "I'd forgot about the cat."

But he must have remembered then, as well as Buddy remembered, for the most curious thing happened, such as comes of tense nerves and weariness. Buddy Brent's voice broke and quavered as though that couplet had a merit of its own.

"I never meant to smash your arm. Why didn't you ever yell?"

There was a clattering sound. Pinckney's sword had fallen on the floor, and the next instant—Harry himself could never explain the next instant, with its infinite complexity.

"Perbacco!" panted the duca. "Are they mad? They—the devil!—they embrace!"

Yes, Buddy Brent had thrown his arm around Pinckney Clew. "Clew," he cried almost with a sob, "were there ever two such damn fools?"

Of course the duca could not understand. How could anyone, unless he knew the beginning and the end, realize that a whole cycle had ended in such a futile burst?

"No," said Pinckney Clew chokingly. "Brent—Brent—if you'd only said it any time. I'd have laughed—if you'd said that!"

Now how was the duca to know the depth of pathos and futility that lurked within his room, or why anger had flared into anticlimax that ended close to tears? And even if the duca had known, perhaps the irony of pride and will and hate would have been lost upon him.

"Hey!" coughed the duca, his face twisted into a curious frown. "A cat you say? I do not understand. What is this about a cat that spits?"

Buddy turned toward him—and after all, what was it, a pathetic cry of youth, or what, that had moved them so? Why should he not have been horribly embarrassed? Why should he not have blushed?

"It's a joke, you fat old idiot!" he shouted, though tears stood in his eyes. "A joke we had when we were—friends—at school!"

I'M A FOOL

By Sherwood Anderson

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It *was* a hard jolt for me, one of the most bitterest I ever had to face. And it all came about through my own foolishness, too. Even yet sometimes, when I think of it, I want to cry or swear or kick myself. Perhaps, even now, after all this time, there will be a kind of satisfaction in making myself look cheap by telling of it.

It began at three o'clock one October afternoon as I sat in the grand stand at the fall trotting and pacing meet at Sandusky, Ohio.

To tell the truth, I felt a little foolish that I should be sitting in the grand stand at all. During the summer before I had left my home town with Harry Whitehead, and with a nigger named Burt, had taken a job as swipe with one of the two horses Harry was campaigning through the fall race meets that year. Mother cried and my sister Mildred, who wanted to get a job as a school teacher in our town that fall, stormed and scolded about the house all during the week before I left. They both thought it something disgraceful that one of our family should take a place as a swipe with race horses. I've an idea Mildred thought my taking the place would stand in the way of her getting the job she'd been working so long for.

But after all I had to work, and there was no other work to be got. A big lumbering fellow of nineteen couldn't just hang around the house and I had got too big to mow people's lawns and sell newspapers. Little chaps who could get next

to people's sympathies by their size were always getting jobs away from me. There was one fellow who kept saying to everyone who wanted a lawn mowed or a cistern cleaned, that he was saving money to work his way through college, and I used to lie awake nights thinking up ways to injure him without being found out. I kept thinking of wagons running over him and bricks falling on his head as he walked along the street. But never mind him.

I got the place with Harry and I liked Burt fine. We got along splendid together. He was a big nigger with a lazy sprawling body and soft, kind eyes, and when it came to a fight he could hit like Jack Johnson. He had Bucephalus, a big black pacing stallion that could do 2.09 or 2.10, if he had to, and I had a little gelding named Doctor Fritz that never lost a race all fall when Harry wanted him to win.

We set out from home late in July in a box car with the two horses and after that, until late November, we kept moving along to the race meets and the fairs. It was a peachy time for me, I'll say that. Sometimes now I think that boys who are raised in regular houses, and never have a fine nigger like Burt for best friend, and go to high school and college, and never steal anything, or get drunk a little, or learn to swear from fellows who know how, or come walking up in front of a grand stand in their shirt sleeves and with dirty horsey pants on when the races are going on and the grand stand is full of people all dressed up— What's the use of talking about it? Such fellows don't know nothing at all. They've never had no opportunity.

But I did. Burt taught me how to rub down a horse and put the bandages on after a race and steam a horse out and a lot of valuable things for any man to know. He could wrap a bandage on a horse's leg so smooth that if it had been the same color you would think it was his skin, and I guess he'd have been a big driver, too, and got to the top like Murphy and Walter Cox and the others if he hadn't been black.

Gee whiz, it was fun. You got to a county seat town, maybe say on a Saturday or Sunday, and the fair began the

next Tuesday and lasted until Friday afternoon. Doctor Fritz would be, say in the 2:25 trot on Tuesday afternoon and on Thursday afternoon Bucephalus would knock 'em cold in the "free-for-all" pace. It left you a lot of time to hang around and listen to horse talk, and see Burt knock some yap cold that got too gay, and you'd find out about horses and men and pick up a lot of stuff you could use all the rest of your life, if you had some sense and salted down what you heard and felt and saw.

And then at the end of the week when the race meet was over, and Harry had run up home to tend to his livery stable business, you and Burt hitched the two horses to carts and drove slow and steady across the country, to the place for the next meeting, so as to not over-heat the horses, etc., etc., you know.

Gee whiz, Gosh amighty, the nice hickorynut and beechnut and oaks and other kinds of trees along the roads, all brown and red, and the good smells, and Burt singing a song that was called Deep River, and the country girls at the windows of houses and everything. You can stick your colleges up your nose for all me. I guess I know where I got my education.

Why, one of those little burgs of towns you come to on the way, say now on a Saturday afternoon, and Burt says, "Let's lay up here." And you did.

And you took the horses to a livery stable and fed them, and you got your good clothes out of a box and put them on.

And the town was full of farmers gaping, because they could see you were race horse people, and the kids maybe never see a nigger before and was afraid and run away when the two of us walked down their main street.

And that was before prohibition and all that foolishness, and so you went into a saloon, the two of you, and all the yaps come and stood around, and there was always someone pretended he was horsey and knew things and spoke up and began asking questions, and all you did was to lie and lie all you could about what horses you had, and I said I owned them, and then some fellow said "will you have a drink of whisky"

and Burt knocked his eye out the way he could say, off-hand like, "Oh, well, all right, I'm agreeable to a little nip. I'll split a quart with you." Gee whiz.

But that isn't what I want to tell my story about. We got home late in November and I'd promised mother I'd quit the race horses for good. There's a lot of things you've got to promise a mother because she don't know any better.

And so, there not being any work in our town any more than when I left there to go to the races, I went off to Sandusky and got a pretty good place taking care of horses for a man who owned a teaming and delivery and storage and coal and real estate business there. It was a pretty good place with good eats, and a day off each week, and sleeping on a cot in a big barn, and mostly just shoveling in hay and oats to a lot of big good-enough skates of horses, that couldn't have trotted a race with a toad. I wasn't dissatisfied and I could send money home.

And then, as I started to tell you, the fall races come to Sandusky and I got the day off and I went. I left the job at noon and had on my good clothes and my new brown derby hat, I had just bought the Saturday before, and a stand-up collar.

First of all I went down-town and walked about with the dudes. I've always thought to myself, "put up a good front" and so I did it. I had forty dollars in my pocket and so I went into the West House, a big hotel, and walked up to the cigar stand. "Give me three twenty-five cent cigars," I said. There was a lot of horsemen and strangers and dressed-up people from other towns standing around in the lobby and in the bar, and I mingled amongst them. In the bar there was a fellow with a cane and a Windsor tie on, that it made me sick to look at him. I like a man to be a man and dress up, but not to go put on that kind of airs. So I pushed him aside kind of rough, and had me a drink of whisky. And then he looked at me, as though he thought maybe he'd get gay, but he changed his mind and didn't say anything. And then I had another drink of whisky, just to show him something,

and went out and had a hack out to the races, all to myself, and when I got there I bought myself the best seat I could get up in the grand stand, but didn't go in for any of these boxes. That's putting on too many airs.

And so there I was, sitting up in the grand stand as gay as you please and looking down on the swipes coming out with their horses, and with their dirty horsey pants on and the horse blankets swung over their shoulders, same as I had been doing all the year before. I liked one thing about the same as the other, sitting up there and feeling grand and being down there and looking up at the yaps and feeling grander and more important, too. One thing's about as good as another, if you take it just right. I've often said that.

Well, right in front of me, in the grand stand that day, there was a fellow with a couple of girls and they was about my age. The young fellow was a nice guy all right. He was the kind maybe that goes to college and then come to be a lawyer or maybe a newspaper editor or something like that, but he wasn't stuck on himself. There are some of that kind are all right and he was one of the ones.

He had his sister with him and another girl and the sister looked around over his shoulder, accidental at first, not intending to start anything—she wasn't that kind—and her eyes and mine happened to meet.

You know how it is. Gee, she was a peach! She had on a soft dress, kind of a blue stuff and it looked carelessly made, but was well sewed and made and everything. I knew that much. I blushed when she looked right at me and so did she. She was the nicest girl I've ever seen in my life. She wasn't stuck on herself and she could have talked proper grammar without being like a school teacher or something like that. What I mean is, she was O. K. I think maybe her father was well-to-do, but not rich to make her chesty because she was his daughter, as some are. Maybe he owned a drug store or a drygoods store in their home town, or something like that. She never told me and I never asked.

My own people are all O. K., too, when you come to that.

My grandfather was Welsh and over in the old country, in Wales he was— But never mind that.

The first heat of the first race come off and the young fellow setting there with the two girls left them and went down to make a bet. I knew what he was up to, but he didn't talk big and noisy and let everyone around know he was a sport, as some do. He wasn't that kind. Well he come back and I heard him tell the two girls what horse he'd bet on, and when the heat was trotted they all half got to their feet and acted in the excited, sweaty way people do when they've got money down on a race, and the horse they bet on is up there pretty close at the end, and they think maybe he'll come on with a rush, but he never does because he hasn't got the old juice in him, come right down to it.

And then, pretty soon, the horses came out for the 2.18 pace and there was a horse in it I knew. He was a horse Bob French had in his string but Bob French didn't own him. He was a horse owned by a Mr. Mathers down at Marietta, Ohio.

This Mr. Mathers had a lot of money and owned some coal mines or something, and he had a swell place out in the country, and he was stuck on race horses, but was a Presbyterian or something, and I think more than likely his wife was one, too, maybe a stiffer one than himself. So he never raced his horses hisself, and the story around the Ohio race tracks was that when one of his horses got ready to go to the races he turned him over to Bob French and pretended to his wife he was sold.

So Bob had the horses and he did pretty much as he pleased and you can't blame Bob, at least, I never did. Sometimes he was out to win and sometimes he wasn't. I never cared much about that when I was swiping a horse. What I did want to know was that my horse had the speed and could go out in front, if you wanted him to.

And, as I'm telling you, there was Bob in this race with one of Mr. Mather's horses, was named "About Ben Ahem" or

something like that, and was fast as a streak. He was a gelding and had a mark of 2.21, but could step in .08 or .09.

Because when Burt and I were out, as I've told you, the year before, there was a nigger Burt knew, worked for Mr. Mathers and he went out there one day when we didn't have no race at the Marietta Fair and our boss Harry was gone home.

And so everyone was gone to the fair but just this one nigger and he took us all through Mr. Mather's swell house and he and Burt tapped a bottle of wine Mr. Mathers had hid in his bedroom, back in a closet, without his wife knowing, and he showed us this Ahem horse. Burt was always stuck on being a driver but didn't have much of a chance to get to the top, being a nigger, and he and the other nigger gulped that whole bottle of wine and Burt got a little lit up.

So the nigger let Burt take this About Ben Ahem and step him a mile in a track Mr. Mathers had all to himself, right there on the farm. And Mr. Mathers had one child, a daughter, kinda sick and not very good looking, and she came home and we had to hustle and get About Ben Ahem stuck back in the barn.

I'm only telling you to get everything straight. At Sandusky, that afternoon I was at the fair, this young fellow with the two girls was fussed, being with the girls and losing his bet; you know how a fellow is that way. One of them was his girl and the other his sister. I had figured that out.

"Gee whiz," I says to myself, "I'm going to give him the dope."

He was mighty nice when I touched him on the shoulder. He and the girls were nice to me right from the start and clear to the end. I'm not blaming them.

And so he leaned back and I give him the dope on About Ben Ahem. "Don't bet a cent on this first heat because he'll go like an oxen hitched to a plow, but when the first heat is over go right down and lay on your pile." That's what I told him.

Well, I never saw a feller treat any one sweller. There

was a fat man sitting beside the little girl, that had looked at me twice by this time, and I at her, and both blushing, and what did he do but have the nerve to turn and ask the fat man to get up and change places with me so I could set with his crowd.

Gee whiz, craps amighty. There I was. What a chump I was to go and get gay up there in the West House bar, and just because that dude was standing there with a cane and that kind of a necktie on, to go and get all balled up and drink that whisky, just to show off.

Of course she would know, me setting right beside her and letting her smell of my breath. I could have kicked myself right down out of that grand stand and all around that race track and made a faster record than most of the skates of horses they had there that year.

Because that girl wasn't any mutt of a girl. What wouldn't I have give right then for a stick of chewing gum to chew, or a lozenger, or some liquorice, or most anything. I was glad I had those twenty-five cent cigars in my pocket and right away I give that fellow one and lit one myself. Then the fat man got up and we changed places and there was I, plunked right down beside her.

They introduced themselves and the fellow's best girl, he had with him, was named Miss Elinor Woodbury, and her father was a manufacturer of barrels from a place called Tiffin, Ohio. And the fellow himself was named Wilbur Wessen and his sister was Miss Lucy Wessen.

I suppose it was their having such swell names got me off my trolley. A fellow, just because he has been a swipe with a race horse, and works taking care of horses for a man in the teaming, delivery, and storage business, isn't any better or worse than anyone else. I've often thought that, and said it too.

But you know how a fellow is. There's something in that kind of nice clothes, and the kind of nice eyes she had, and the way she had looked at me, awhile before, over her brother's shoulder, and me looking back at her, and both of us blushing.

I couldn't show her up for a boob, could I?

I made a fool of myself, that's what I did. I said my name was Walter Mathers from Marietta, Ohio, and then I told all three of them the smashingest lie you ever heard. What I said was that my father owned the horse About Ben Ahem and that he had let him out to this Bob French for racing purposes, because our family was proud and had never gone into racing this way, in our own name, I mean. Then I had got started and they were all leaning over and listening, and Miss Lucy Wessen's eyes were shining, and I went the whole hog.

I told her about our place down at Marietta, and about the big stables and the grand brick house we had on a hill, up above the Ohio River, but I knew enough not to do it in no bragging way. What I did was to start things and let them drag the rest out of me. I acted just as reluctant to tell as I could. Our family hasn't got any barrel factory, and, since I've known us, we've always been pretty poor, but not asking anything of anyone at that, and my grandfather, over in Wales—but never mind that.

We set there talking like we had known each other for years and years, and I went and told them that my father had been expecting maybe this Bob French wasn't on the square, and had sent me up to Sandusky on the sly to find out what I could.

And I bluffed it through I had found out all about the 2.18 pace, in which About Ben Ahem was to start.

I said he would lose the first heat by pacing like a lame cow and then he would come back and skin 'em alive after that. And to back up what I said I took thirty dollars out of my pocket and handed it to Mr. Wilbur Wessen and asked him, would he mind, after the first heat, to go down and place it on About Ben Ahem for whatever odds he could get. What I said was that I didn't want Bob French to see me and none of the swipes.

Sure enough the first heat come off and About Ben Ahem went off his stride, up the back stretch, and looked like a

wooden horse or a sick one, and come in last. Then this Wilbur Wessen went down to the betting place under the grand stand and there I was with the two girls, and when that Miss Woodbury was looking the other way once, Lucy Wessen kinda, with her shoulder you know, kinda touched me. Not just tucking down, I don't mean. You know how a woman can do. They get close, but not getting gay either. You know what they do. Gee whiz.

And then they give me a jolt. What they had done, when I didn't know, was to get together, and they had decided Wilbur Wessen would bet fifty dollars, and the two girls had gone and put in ten dollars each, of their own money, too. I was sick then, but I was sicker later.

About the gelding, About Ben Ahem, and their winning their money, I wasn't worried a lot about that. It came out O. K. Ahem stepped the next three heats like a bushel of spoiled eggs going to market before they could be found out, and Wilbur Wessen had got nine to two for the money. There was something else eating me.

Because Wilbur come back, after he had bet the money, and after he had spent most of his time talking to that Miss Woodbury, and Lucy Wessen and I was left alone on a desert island. Gee, if I'd only been on the square or if there had been any way of getting myself on the square. There ain't any Walter Mathers, like I said to her and them, and hasn't ever been one, but if there was, I bet I'd go to Marietta, Ohio, and shoot him tomorrow.

There I was, big boob that I am. Pretty soon the race was over, and Wilbur had gone down and collected our money, and we had a hack down-town, and he stood us a swell supper at the West House, and a bottle of champagne beside.

And I was with that girl and she wasn't saying much, and I wasn't saying much either. One thing I know. She wasn't stuck on me because of the lie about my father being rich and all that. There's a way you know. . . . Craps amighty. There's a kind of girl, you see just once in your life, and if you don't get busy and make hay, then you're gone for good

and all, and might as well go and jump off a bridge. They give you a look from inside of them somewhere, and it ain't no vamping, and what it means is—you want that girl to be your wife, and you want nice things around her like flowers and swell clothes, and you want her to have the kids you're going to have, and you want good music played and no rag time. Gee whiz.

There's a place over near Sandusky, across a kind of bay, and it's called Cedar Point. And after we had supper we went over to it in a launch, all by ourselves. Wilbur and Miss Lucy and that Miss Woodbury had to catch a ten o'clock train back to Tiffin, Ohio, because, when you're out with girls like that you can't get careless and miss any trains and stay out all night, like you can with some kinds of Janes.

And Wilbur blowed himself to the launch and it cost him fifteen cold plunks, but I wouldn't never have knew if I hadn't listened. He was no tin horn kind of a sport.

Over at the Cedar Point place, we didn't stay around where there was a gang of common kind of cattle at all.

There was big dance halls and dining places for yaps, and there was a beach you could walk along and get where it was dark, and we went there.

She didn't talk hardly at all and neither did I, and I was thinking how glad I was my mother was all right, and always made us kids learn to eat with a fork at table, and not swill soup, and not be noisy and rough like a gang you see around a race track that way.

Then Wilbur and his girl went away up the beach and Lucy and I sat down in a dark place, where there was some roots of old trees the water had washed up, and after that the time, till we had to go back in the launch and they had to catch their train, wasn't nothing at all. It went like winking your eye.

Here's how it was. The place we were setting in was dark, like I said, and there was the roots from that old stump sticking up like arms, and there was a watery smell, and the night was like—as if you could put your hand out and feel it—so warm and soft and dark and sweet like an orange.

I most cried and I most swore and I most jumped up and danced, I was so mad and happy and sad.

When Wilbur come back from being alone with his girl, she saw him coming, Lucy she says, "We've got to go to the train now," and she was most crying too, but she never knew nothing I knew, and she couldn't be so all busted up. And then, before Wilbur and Miss Woodbury got up to where we was, she put her face up and kissed me quick and put her head up against me and she was all quivering and —Gee whiz.

Sometimes I hope I have cancer and die. I guess you know what I mean. We went in the launch across the bay to the train like that, and it was dark too. She whispered and said it was like she and I could get out of the boat and walk on the water, and it sounded foolish, but I knew what she meant.

And then quick we were right at the depot, and there was a big gang of yaps, the kind that goes to the fairs, and crowded and milling around like cattle, and how could I tell her? "It won't be long because you'll write and I'll write to you." That's all she said.

I got a chance like a hay barn afire. A swell chance I got.

And maybe she would write me, down at Marietta that way, and the letter would come back, and stamped on the front of it by the U. S. A. "There ain't any such guy," or something like that, whatever they stamp on a letter that way.

And me trying to pass myself off for a big bug and a swell —to her, as decent a little body as God ever made. Craps amighty—a swell chance I got!

And then the train come in, and she got on it, and Wilbur Wessen he come and shook hands with me and that Miss Woodbury was nice too and bowed to me, and I at her, and the train went and I busted out and cried like a kid.

Gee, I could have run after that train and made Dan Patch look like a freight train after a wreck but, socks amighty, what was the use? Did you ever see such a fool?

I'll bet you what—if I had an arm broke right now or a train had run over my foot—I wouldn't go to no doctor at all. I'd set down and let her hurt and hurt—that's what I'd do.

I'll bet you what—if I hadn't drunk that booze I'd a never been such a boob as to tell such a lie—that couldn't never be made straight to a lady like her.

I wish I had that fellow right here that had on a Windsor tie and carried a cane. I'd smash him for fair. Gosh darn his eyes. He's a big fool—that's what he is.

And if I'm not another you go find me one and I'll quit working and be a bum and give him my job. I don't care nothing for working, and earning money, and saving it for no such boob as myself.

Problem 6

POINT OF VIEW

In writing the short-story, one of the artistic problems which you are certain to meet at once is the choosing of the point of view from which to present the material to your readers. This problem is very closely bound up with that of choosing a narrator or person to tell your story. There is no difficulty in your choice when you decide upon one of the actors as the teller of the story, whether that actor is the central actor or a minor actor, who merely records what he has seen in regard to another person who is the main actor. In choosing a narrator you say to yourself "who is to tell this story to the reader?" In choosing a point of view you say "through whose consciousness is this story to be rendered?" When you have a hero narrator the answer to both these questions is the same. You say, "the hero-narrator tells the story and it is his point of view." It is his thoughts that are analyzed. Point of view is really a problem of thought analysis. When you choose an actor-narrator who is not the chief actor, the answer to the two questions still remains the same—it is this actor-narrator who tells the story and it is this actor-narrator whose thoughts are analyzed by himself, as in the case of the hero-narrator. You will be helped by keeping in mind one definite restriction. It is that no actor can ever analyze the thoughts of another actor. This is quite obvious, yet it is often disregarded by writers who fail to see the resemblance between fiction and life.

When you choose as the teller of your story a person outside of the story—that is to say, an author—who tells of the happenings in the third person, you run into your first great problem of deciding upon a point of view. Such an author may be

purely objective—he may never for a moment go into the consciousness of any of his actors. On the other hand, he may choose to analyze the thoughts of one actor. Ordinarily, this will be the actor who is the person who faces the main narrative problem of the story. The third person narrator may choose to be omniscient, or all-seeing. He may determine to present to you two points of view regarding the same happening. By making such a choice the author limits at once the unity of his story. If the happenings of your story can all be presented to your reader through the eyes and consciousness of a single actor, you achieve a unity which you must otherwise sacrifice. In this way your task approximates very closely that of the dramatist. The dramatist concentrates upon a leading actor. To aid the "lead" he puts others upon the stage; he puts words into their mouths; but the thoughts in their heads he is forced to express in words. You may take a short cut to those thoughts by analysis; but every time you analyze thoughts of more than one actor in your story, you lose sight of the unity, which is the great aim of the short-story writer, who is not so much interested in the reactions of a number of actors as he is in the central actor, who is shown in his attempt to solve a main problem which confronts him. That actor's appearance; his actions; his thoughts or feelings, are in most stories the short-story writer's interest. The other actors merely appear as foils to further or hinder the action of the main actor in his attempt to solve his problem. If you will turn to "The Mummy," by John Galsworthy, in the Case Book, you will find an example of this centralization of the actor's thoughts throughout the story. The story is that of Eugene Daunt, and it is his problem. Never are the thoughts of any other actor analyzed throughout the story.

The story by Adela Rogers St. John, called "The Haunted Lady," reprinted in the Case Book, is an illustration of a variation of the point of view. At some points in the story the point of view is that of Burke Innes, at other times it is that of Gretchen Innes. Women, seem, as a rule, to have more difficulty in unifying the point of view in their stories than do men

writers. After a good many years, now, I have come to the conclusion that the requirement which is so strongly stressed by most teachers of short-story writing that there shall be a single point of view in the short-story is, as far as women are concerned, "more honored in the breach than in the observance." Men seem to grasp the essential method of preserving the unity of the point of view more quickly than women; what the psychological explanation of this is I do not pretend to know. I merely point it out.

You will notice that I made a differentiation between the objective rendering by the third person and the analytical rendering. The usual distinction made is between objective and subjective. "Subjective" writing is undesirable. It is the comment which says "and so he walked out of the story." This sort of thing may be rather clever comment, but it brings the reader back to earth from the plane of emotional interest in happenings which have been rendered almost real to him by the author. It is a foolish exploitation of personality; because, by it, the writer runs the risk of losing the interest of the reader. Whenever an author has succeeded in making me lose my consciousness of my surroundings and become conscious of the happenings in his story, I resent the intrusion of the author into the story. As soon as he does so intrude it ceases to be a third person story; it becomes a hybrid. Such comments as "you will do well to consider the state of Tom Donnelly as he then appeared," or "Tom Donnelly walked out of the door, and so out of the story," besides detracting from the essentially dramatic rendering of the story destroy the illusion of the reader in the reality of that story by suggesting to him that the happenings are not inevitable but are being arranged by a visible manipulator. It is as if the stage magician permitted you to see the rabbit going into the hat from which he afterwards produces it as a surprise.

You will see that the problem of point of view occurs only in the third person story. The problem arises every time you begin to plot or plan your story, and it arises within the story every time you present a scene within that story. The technical

devices for portraying character are showing the responses of the actor through the change in his appearance; his subtle actions; his violent actions, and finally, his thoughts or feelings. The unity of your story will lead you to analyze only the thoughts and feelings of one person. There are cases, of course, where the author may deliberately choose to tell the story from the points of view of two different people. When people analyze in addition the thoughts of minor characters, ordinarily the explanation is simple. It is that it is easier to do this than to adhere to the strict unity of the single main character analysis. It is very easy to go behind the appearance and action of the minor characters and to tell the reader through interpolated analysis what those characters as well as the main characters are thinking. Now this would be excusable if it were necessary, but it seldom is. It nearly always weakens the unity of interest. It confuses the reader. He cannot concentrate upon the single problem because he does not know what that single problem is. The narrative problem, you will remember, is a narrative problem because of a character's response to a condition.

Where there is a switching of point of view (analysis of thought) the reader doesn't know whether it is the problem of the man in the story, for example, or the woman in the story. He may begin by assuming that it is one person's problem and then have to readjust himself to the realization that it is another person's problem. Every time you cause the reader to go behind the thoughts of a minor character he becomes interested, for the moment at least, not so much in the main character as in the minor character. This is risky. In the story in which the author begins in the third person to analyze the point of view of the main actor, the reader's interest should never be permitted to swerve from the problem confronting the main character and his character reactions, if the author wishes to retain the strict unity in point of view.

It is, of course, always possible to have your first scene a purely objective scene, and then out of the result of that scene to show that one character has become confronted with a

problem, and thereafter you will be able to present the story from his point of view. This happens in "Sunk," (Case No. 6 in the Case Book.) The scene between the uncle and nephew is objective. No actor's thoughts are analyzed. After the first scene the point of view is Jason's.

You may also pause in the middle of your story to switch again from analysis of an actor's thoughts to a purely objective treatment. That is to say, you may analyze no character's thoughts during the progress of a scene. In that case the scene is objectively rendered.

The tendency against which this lecture is intended to warn you is the tendency to divert interest by analysis of the thoughts of a minor character when that diversion of interest can be very readily and easily avoided through a knowledge of the principles of craftsmanship. For the solution of the narrative problem it is sometimes necessary that the audience know that a minor character is thinking certain thoughts. But in order to know that thoughts are passing in a person's head analysis is not always necessary, simply because thoughts are *unspoken words,* and equally, words are spoken *thoughts.* You can use words instead of thoughts.

There is no fear of a long soliloquy, because if a minor actor has many conflicting thoughts that are necessary to an understanding of the story it is quite likely that you have made a wrong choice of point of view, and that this actor's point of view ought to be the single point of view in the story. Let minor actors *say what they are thinking.* Remember that it is easy to break long speeches by interruptions, either of descriptive comment by you, as author, or by the interpolated conversation of another actor. The better craftsman you are, the more easily you will be able to do this.

When I speak of main and minor characters I do not mean always that the main character is more important than the minor characters, or more interesting, I simply mean that he is the person who is confronted by the narrative problem.

There will occur to you at once the possibility that you may be interested very much in the responses of one actor whose

thoughts you would like very much to analyze, yet your realization that this actor is a very unpleasant person and one who would not be likely to win the sympathy of your reader will make you pause before determining upon the point of view.

In a story called "The Episode at Pin Tail Lake," Mr. Irvin S. Cobb, being an experienced craftsman solved the two problems very nicely. He presented the story from point of view of the murderer, and then bracketed it between a Beginning and an Ending. You have here in story form the modern version of "The Play Within a Play." It is merely a story within a story. The main actor and the person who has the problem to solve is the detective. He eventually solves the problem. There is no Body to the story in the strict sense of attempts being made by a character to bring about a solution of the problem. Instead of this natural Body there is a story of the man who murdered the other man, and it is from the point of view of this man that we view the happenings that would normally occupy the Body of the story.

This is one of the cases in which a variation in the point of view is permissible and is still artistic. The detective is the main character, although he is not the most interesting character; that is, interesting from the psychological point of view. In the treatment of main and minor actors in your story, the chief difference will ordinarily be in the space allotted and in the concentration of interest. The minor characters or actors exist only as foils, ordinarily, for the main actor, or as his opponents, and as his opponents receive a large amount of space. Of course, in the stories with love interest, some actors exist not as actors, but really as prizes to be won. The ordinary story of accomplishment is somebody's attempt, you will remember, to achieve a purpose by winning a prize. In the love-story the prize may be a girl, if it is a man's story, or a man if it is a girl's story. The practiced writer will extract better value from the portrayal of the actions and speech of the minor actors by making their behavior reflect their opinion of the main actor, and this response of others to an actor is, you have been shown, one method of showing character.

Sometimes he may go as far as to present a very interesting character without ever analyzing that character's thoughts, confining the analysis of thoughts entirely to those of a minor observer of the action, and allowing the character of the person he is chiefly interested in to unfold through an objective presentation of acts and speech, and through comments concerning that character by minor actors.

Usually, however, because the short-story is concerned with the single problem of a chief actor, you will concentrate your own and your reader's attention as much as possible upon the chief actor. You will give him more space than the other actors. You will keep him and his problem before the reader always, even in scenes where he cannot physically appear. Those scenes you will render objectively. That chief actor's personality you will cause to pervade the story. Remember always that a story is the pictorial presentation of an actor attempting to accomplish some object or to solve some problem despite certain obstacles. For a strictly dramatic presentation these obstacles will be made to appear to the reader just as they would have appeared to the main actor. Those scenes in which he could not have been present you will present objectively without any analysis whatsoever. The chief actor will not know what another actor is thinking. He may surmise it. He may hear the actor express that actor's thoughts or give voice to that actor's feelings. He may deduce from the other's appearance or actions just what the other is thinking or feeling. In that case your task is not a difficult one at all. It is very simple. You can always use the words "he (the main character) surmised," or you may say "from this he (the main character) deduced."

It is never necessary to analyze the thoughts or feelings of a minor actor to know what he is thinking or feeling. That thought or feeling can be expressed by his appearance, by his words, or by his actions. So much for the problem of point of view as it faces you in the planning of your complete story. But, let us consider for a moment how this problem is affected by the scenes which you propose to present to your audience:

You will remember that in order to give narrative interest to any scene a purpose must be apparent for one of the actors. It is not essential that the purpose shall be that of the main actor. For example, in the story "Once And Always," (Case No. 8 in the Case Book), lines 71 to 171, in the scene between Lemuel Gower and Gideon Higsbee the point of view is that of Gideon Higsbee, but the purpose of the scene is that of Lemuel Gower, when he tries to persuade Gideon Higsbee to go over and talk to the three strangers. Although the purpose of the scene is Lemuel's, he is seen objectively, but Gideon's thoughts are analyzed. This is because the point of view for the whole story is that of Gideon. The main or story problem is his.

If you have any difficulty in this regard, do not let it discourage you. A very easy way is open to you. If your tendency is to say the narrative problem of this scene is "can Lemuel Gower persuade Gideon Higsbee to go over and speak to the strangers," and it seems to you that the point-of-view of the scene ought therefore to be Lemuel Gower's, just rephrase the narrative question of the scene to keep Gideon's point-of-view. It will then read thus: "Can Gideon Higsbee *prevent Lemuel Gower from persuading him* to go over and talk to the three strangers?" Preserving a single point-of-view is, like everything else in the production of a short-story, a matter of craftsmanship.

It must be kept in mind always that the choosing of a narrator, and the selection of a point-of-view are only *devices* to secure either *plausibility* or *dramatic effect*. A point-of-view is determined upon, because from that point-of-view the effect of the happenings may be presented most *dramatically*. Seen by the reader through the emotions of an actor in the story, the happenings are played up. If we see that a certain actor is perturbed, by the happenings, we are more likely to feel that there is reason for being perturbed than if the happenings were presented baldly. We become interested, as readers, if we see that the *effect of the happenings upon an actor* is to cause that actor to feel emotion.

If you will read over the Lecture upon The Scene as the Unit, you will see that *the effect of the happenings upon an actor* is the *fifth step* of a scene, and that the fifth step is the *Plot Step*. It is through the fifth step of each scene that the Dramatic effect of the Plot is heightened for the reader. From the conflict or clash of forces in the scene comes *Scene Drama;* but this is made clear to the reader in the first four steps of the scene. At the close of the Scene the reader is aware of a Dramatic Crisis in the Plot. The most effective drama in regard to the Plot is the sense of *impending disaster* which the reader feels. It is communicated to the reader most easily through the person whose *point-of-view* is chosen for the interpretation of the action. Sometimes the point-of-view of a story coincides with the choice of a narrator, as in the first-person-hero story and in the story told by the first-person-narrator who is not the hero. In the third-person story, the point-of-view is not that of the narrator, but the point-of-view of one of the actors. Remember that the point-of-view need not be that of the chief actor.

The chief actor is the person who is called upon to solve the problem. For example the chief actor in a story may be a sheriff who is trying to gain re-election; the narrator may be a third person, never appearing in the story, perfectly anonymous. But the point-of-view may be that of the sheriff's wife. In such a story the thoughts and feelings of the sheriff's wife alone will be analyzed. The fifth step of each scene will sum up her thoughts. From those thoughts the reader will become aware that the effect of the scene upon her is to add to the sense of impending disaster or the sense of dangerous conflict threatened.

These thoughts are the effect of the scene. They are the fifth step of the scene. The reiteration of anticipated disaster will add cumulatively to the suspense of the Plot. In this way the reader is made aware *vicariously* of this dramatic quality which gives to any series of happenings a measure of importance that they could not themselves elicit. It is for this reason

that the ability to write good *fifth steps* is the ability to be most prized and most striven for by a writer.

The ability to write the four steps of the scene is one which can be easily acquired. The ability to write the fifth step of the scene in such a way as to bring out the dramatic relation of the scene to the Plot is the mark of the competent writer. We shall go into this more fully when we take up some other aspects of the Craftsmanship of the Modern Short-story. Just now I want you to concentrate your attention upon the problem involved in selecting a point-of-view. A study of this Problem should make clear to you the following principles.

1. Point-of-view is not a problem except in the story told in the third person.
2. Although the story told in the third person may present, through analyzed thoughts, the point-of-view of more than one person, such switching about confuses the unity of the reader's interest.
3. The thoughts of all but one actor are best put into speech.
4. The author may select as the actor whose analyzed thoughts determine the point-of-view:

   (a) the chief actor
   (b) the chief opponent
   (c) a minor actor.

Problem 7

STYLE IN THE MODERN SHORT-STORY

> "If there is anywhere a thing said in two sentences that could have been as clearly and as engagingly and as forcibly said in one, then it's amateur work."
>
> Robert Louis Stevenson.

Any discussion of Style must be approached with a great deal of trepidation. To begin with, it is difficult to reach any common definition of style. Different people mean different things when they use the word Style. What we are now concerned with is Style as it applies to the short-story writer's use of language. It is always very difficult to divorce Style and Substance. In my opinion the Substance almost always dictates the Style. There is such a thing as the approach or manner of the author; but this approach and manner are distinct from Style in the sense in which I use it; that is to say, the method of using language which is the fiction writer's as opposed to the writer of non-fiction.

One thing upon which all practitioners seem to agree is that clarity is the most important thing. Sir Rider Haggard in his autobiography "The Days of My Life," (Longmans, Green & Company) gives this opinion as to the relative importance of Substance and Style: "Of course, I know that many of our critics think and preach that Style is the really important thing; much more important than the Substance of the story. I cannot believe that they are right. The substance is, as it were, the soul of the matter. The Style is its outward and visible body. I prefer creation with a great soul, even if its form is somewhat marred, to one with a beautifully finished

form and very little soul. Of course, when the two are found together, a rare event, there is perfection. Also, people differ in their ideas of what Style really is. By it, some understand inverted sentences, unusual words, and far-fetched metaphors or allusions, making up a whole that is difficult to comprehend. Others hold that the greater the simplicity of the language the better the Style. I am not an authority, but my own view is that, above all things, the written word should be clear and absolutely readable, and that work which does not fulfill these conditions can scarcely be expected to endure."

When all is said and done, the differentiation that most people make between different kinds of Style is the differentiation between simple sentences and sentences which are compound or complex. If you write "John struck the man" you will have written a simple sentence. If you write "The man struck the pavement" you will have written another simple sentence. If you join these two sentences together with "and," thus: "John struck the man; and the man struck the pavement," you will have joined or "compounded" two simple sentences into one "compound" sentence. You can easily separate the parts of this compound sentence. However, if you begin to qualify this compound sentence, you may produce something like this: "With scarcely a moment's hesitation, John, who was prone to strike first and argue afterward, aimed a blow at the stranger, which caught him flush upon the point of the chin, causing him to stagger for a moment and to clutch at a non-existent support in a way that was half pitiful, half ludicrous, before he pitched backward heavily, striking his head upon the pavement with the ominous cracking sound that is made when a cocoanut is smitten with a hammer."

This sentence cannot be so easily simplified and separated into its component parts. Complexities arise; and for that reason it is called a "complex" sentence.

In the light of Style, your only consideration of this distinction of kinds of sentences will be to remember that the material to be presented to your readers is roughly classified as (a) interchange, and (b) explanatory matter necessary to make the

reader understand that interchange and to respond to it. For the interchange you will, as a general rule, use simple or compound sentences; and for the explanatory matter, complex sentences. Like all general rules, this is one which grew out of the practice of writers. It cannot be followed too slavishly. Yet, this distinction between types of sentences, which is the distinction made by so many people who discuss Style, is a comparatively unimportant distinction as far as the writer of a short-story is concerned. The important distinction that a short-story writer should make in regard to Style is the distinction between statements and pictorial rendering. For example, to say "it was a very charming room" is a statement. To say "a man looked at his wife" is also a statement. To say that "Bill Jones is angry" is also a statement. If, on the other hand, you proceed to develop the idea conveyed in the statement in terms of sense-appeal, and primarily of images, you will be writing pictorially. You will be appealing to the senses of your readers in such a way as to cause an impression of reality. Statement is an appeal to the intellect, whereas what you are concerned with is an appeal to the senses. A statement made by a banker to his board of directors is a very interesting statement to that board. Those directors are able to visualize behind the figures which are presented to them great enterprises which are successful or unsuccessful, as the case may be. Because these men are able to project their imaginations thus beyond the cold, unimaginative numerical units they have become important personages. When the banker presents his figures, he expects the directors to employ their imaginations. On the other hand, the average reader, because he has no special interest in those figures, would not project his imagination. There is no reason that he should.

The impression (sense appeal) in a short-story should be put there by the writer. The reader is prepared to respond emotionally to a series of impressions. A statement is not an impression. Whenever, as a writer, you make a statement, you are "passing the buck" to the reader. This is all very well as long as you are without competition. The basic fact remains,

however, that the competition does exist and is very keen. No short-story appears alone. It appears, ordinarily, in company with seven or eight, or perhaps ten others. The reader is not compelled to read your story. He has the opportunity of choosing between it and the other stories. What he ordinarily does is to begin your story by reading, perhaps, three or four hundred words. That much leeway he will give any author. If he likes what is there presented he will continue; it captures his interest and projects for him impressions, and primarily, images, which will hold him. If he receives from it some impression of reality he is likely to continue. On the other hand, if he reads only statements, and receives no impression he will not bother to project his own imagination; because either consciously or unconsciously, he will say that that is the job of the writer and that the writer has no warrant for imposing upon him the task which the writer should have performed.

Style, from the point of view of the writer of short-stories, is not so much a matter of sentence structure as it is of diction or choice of language. The demands upon a writer's technical equipment are that it shall be language which appeals to the senses of a reader in such a way as to make an impression. The impression will, of course, be usually an appeal to the sense of sight. That is the sense which people most ordinarily use in forming images or impressions. Somehow, I feel that among American writers not enough emphasis is placed upon the other senses in an effort to create an impression. Kipling says:

> "Smells are surer than sights and sounds
> To make the heartstrings crack."

It is obvious that smells and sounds must be concerned with stimuli rather than with character responses, and that they will be used when the writer is interested primarily in conveying the impression of place or of objects; but when he is interested in conveying the impression of an actor's responses, he will be concerned chiefly with appeals to sight. While the sense of sight will always be the great sense upon which

writers will depend for successful impressions, it can certainly be supplemented by the others. The poets, whose chief interest is impression, are the striking examplars of this. Their impressions are conveyed through senses other than sight.

More and more I become convinced that the average short-stories could profit greatly from a study of poetry, purely and simply as a model for sense impressions. Three things stand out in the methods of the poets: First, imagery; second, comparison; third, personification. John Masefield, in his story "The Old Front Line," says, "Danger, Death, Shocking Escape and Firm Resolve went up and down those roads daily and nightly."

Again in his book, "Gallipoli," he uses virtually the same device when he says, "It was a day of the unmatchable Ægean spring; Samothrace and Eubœa were stretched out in the sunset like giants watching the chess; waiting it seemed, like almost human things, as they had waited for the fall of Troy and the bale-fires of Agamemnon."

This giving to inanimate things the quality of life is something of which writers should never tire. Stephenson, in "Markheim," says: "The inner door stood ajar and peered into that leaguer of shadows with a long slit of daylight like a pointing finger."

Perhaps the most important word in the vocabulary of any writer is the word "like." You wish to describe for somebody who has not seen it, something that you wish to impress upon his consciousness. You, therefore, tell him that it is like something with which he is familiar. Masefield says: "The hill on which Swaber is built is *like* a great thumb laid down beside the Ancre River." "It looked *like* a reef on a loppy day. For one instant it could be seen as a white rim above the wire, then some comber of a big shell struck it fair and spouted it black aloft." "Then, the bay is like a blue jewel."

You will be interested in seeing that the stories in the Case Book all contain examples of figurative language, presented as comparisons, metaphors, or personifications. They would all suffer tremendously were the writers deprived of the word

"like" or some equivalent such as "as if," "as though," etc. The following extract from page 76 of Prof. Charles H. Raymond's "Essentials of English Composition," published by The Century Co., New York, is worthy of your attention, as indeed is the complete text of the book. It defines figurative language:

> Figurative language enables us to compare an object with some other object when the resemblance between the two objects is imaginary rather than literal. It is not difficult to distinguish literal language from figurative language. For example:
>
> *Literal language:* A cat is like a tiger. (The two creatures belong to the same order of animals, and one actually resembles the other in habits, appearance, etc.)
>
> *Figurative language, similie:* He fought like a tiger. (He did not actually fight with nails and teeth, but he did, in the ferocity and daring of his fighting, remind us of a tiger.)
>
> *Figurative language, metaphor:* He was a tiger in a fight.
>
> Both the simile and the metaphor given above express a figurative resemblance between two objects. The difference is this: the simile expresses the resemblance in the form of a direct comparison; the metaphor indicates the resemblance by applying to one of the objects (*he*) a word (*tiger*) that literally designates the other object. Usually *like* or *as* is employed in expressing a comparison that constitutes a simile.
>
> Metonymy, like metaphor, is a figure of speech by which the name of one object is given to the other of two objects. The difference between the two figures is this: in a metaphor, the name is given by way of comparing the two objects; in metonymy, the name is given because, by some association of facts or ideas, one object suggests the other. We employ metonymy when we say *the press,* for the newspapers; *the crown,* for the regal government; *the plow,* for agriculture; *the bench,* for the judges.
>
> Personification is a figure of speech which represents (a)

a lifeless object, (b) one of the lower animals, or (c) an idea, quality, or other abstraction, as a person; that is, as being capable of thought, feeling, and speech. For example: The *hot and thirsty face* of the desert dismayed us. The mountain *rose up* before us.

COMPARISONS

THE ADVENTURE OF ULYSSES, by Charles Lamb, Case No. 1.

line 105, He looked more like a mountain crag than a man,

line 175, —, but gripping two of the nearest of them, as if they had been no more than children,—

line 191, At a sight so horrid, Ulysses and his men were like distracted people.

line 220,—, with as much ease as a man opens and shuts a quiver's lid,—

line 224, —, with whistlings (as sharp as winds in storms) to the mountains.

Then Ulysses, of whose strength or cunning the Cyclop seems to have had as little heed as of an infant's,—

line 410, —and spoke to it as if it understood him,—

THE COP AND THE ANTHEM, by O. Henry, Case No. 2.

line 44, Just as his more fortunate fellow New Yorkers had bought their tickets to Palm Beach and the Riviera each winter, so Soapy had made his humble arrangements for his annual hegira to the Island.

line 77, As Cæsar had his Brutus, every bed of charity must have its toll of a bath, every loaf of bread its compensation of a private and personal inquisition.

line 169, —but friendly, as one who greets good fortune.

line 201, —with a voice like buttercakes and an eye like the cherry in a Manhattan cocktail.

line 321, In his fancy the Island seemed an unattainable Arcadia.

SPARE PARTS, by Frank R. Adams. Case No. 2.

line 190, —raised the hood, just as if she knew what to do with the hub-cap wrench which she held in her hand.

line 515, That phrase "wait for you" made Carson respond to the sting as if there had been dynamite under him.

line 783, —was running as smoothly as if it had been born there.

THE ESCAPE OF MR. TRIMM, by Irvin S. Cobb. Case No. 5.

line 36, Through the seven months of his stay in the jail that question had been always at the back part of his head, ticking away there like a little watch that never needed winding.

line 301, Slipping the locked cuff back and forth on Mr. Trimm's lower arm like a man adjusting a part of machinery,—

line 323, For half a minute Mr. Trimm stood like a rooster hypnotized by a chalkmark,—

line 353, His hands went up, twisting awkwardly like crab claws.

line 544, —with his eyes shifting from Mr. Trimm's face to Mr. Trimm's hands and back again, as though he couldn't decide which was the more interesting part of him;—

line 571, He was confused in his gait, almost as if his lower limbs had been fettered, too.

line 596, He lifted Mr. Trimm's hands as casually as if they had been his hands and not Mr. Trimm's,—

line 632, —it was exactly as though the train were trying to go forward and back at the same time.

line 648, Mr. Trimm was plucked from his seat as though a giant hand had him by the collar—

SUNK, by George F. Worts. Case No. 6.

line 7, He moved over the thick rugs with the ponderous felicity of an aged pelican.

PARADISE ISLAND, by Will Payne. Case No. 7.

line 1, Dwyer halted at the ditch—abruptly, as though an invisible hand had seized his arm.

line 94, —but his face was much too narrow, as though it had been squeezed in a press,—

line 97, On first acquaintance the disparity between profile and full face was fairly disconcerting, as though he had two faces, and they were of different ages.

line 103, —, and a goneness as though a blow in the stomach had taken his wind.

line 175, He wore large gold-bowed spectacles, and walked with a stoop, as though apologizing for his five feet three inches of height.

line 276, For there was something in Langley's embarrassed air—well, as though a mouse had abruptly leveled a gun at one's head.

line 442, Dwyer felt something soft and weak but like a leech, not to be shaken off.

line 721, The astonishment arose partly from a feeling of the insignificance of his opponent, as though an embarrassed mouse should sit up on its tail in the path of an elephant—

line 836, —was relieved to get away, like a tired boxer at the end of a round.

line 919, He was like a man lying behind a dyke of sand which time might solidify into rock; meanwhile any chance wave would wash it away.

ONCE AND ALWAYS, by John P. Marquand. Case No. 8.

line 3, Lemuel Gower had faded long ago from active recollection, like everything else in Agamemnon.

line 172, Gideon Higsbee's mutton-chop whiskers were soft and white as new-flown snow and comforting as a Sunday's benediction.

line 303, —his shriveled face and glassy eyes were genial as the setting sun.

line 505, It was like the knife finding the chink in the oyster,—

line 587, Mr. Higsbee rose from the table, and looked like an old engraving.

line 624, They were as white as the new-flown snow.

line 816, He only looked at Gideon as a man might who has speculated largely upon human frailty until he is surprised by nothing.

line 865, The pearl-gray spats upon his patent leather shoes, his gold-headed cane and smooth silk hat were like a dream come true, like a living, rustic fairy tale of benevolence and wealth.

line 892, He looked singularly out of place, somewhat like a rare orchid in a cabbage patch.

WESTERN STUFF, by Mary Brecht Pulver. Case No. 10.

line 134, It only makes me look like a sugared cruller trimmed with currant jelly. I always feel, anyhow, like a fresh-branded steer when I clap the red-hot iron on me.

line 155, —far, far below, a million teeming pygmy dark forms rushing on remote, ludicrous errands, foaming like disturbed ants, from Sixth Avenue in Broadway into Thirty-fourth Street.

line 419, —there stands now rank upon rank of stucco apartment houses like magnificent layer cakes, with at least one five tube heterodyne and one pair of golf pants per layer.

line 525, —whose round blue eyes, trimmed with long, dark, curling lashes, frankly moist, were as blue as the Arizona heavens, and the whole framed with a swinging aureole of short, curly, sun-kissed hair whose undulation had no need of the permanent wave octopus and appeared to have been dipped in liquid gilt.

line 788, Verena bent closer and two great tears like flat silver disks slipped from beneath her eyelashes.

line 1086, —and she looked as Penelope might if summoned on Ulysses' peril to pack her suitcase and go and rival Circe—

line 1143, —with her hands, so muscular and capable on the bridle and now impotent in this situation as two wax lilies, tightly clenched in her palm,—

line 1367, —was after it, horse and rider like one creature centaur fashion;—

line 1381, Light as a thistle the rodeo queen lit on the ground in a flying leap,—

line 1385, With a half dozen motions she had it bound neatly around the steer as a housewife trusses a Sunday fowl for roasting.

line 1415, Sparkling silver lace, fine as Jack Frost spins on the windowpane, formed the tiny bodice,—

line 1893, Buck looked like a steer, jerked to a fall, pinned on the rope, with herself running up to tie.

line 1966, The Persian Nightingale, that Oriental garden and rendezvous of delightful dalliance with the subtler forms of evening pleasure, which is set like a jewel in the smart aloofness of the Sixties and approached like a guarded citadel by password and listed membership only.

line 2130, —moved forward with a settling, beautiful precision, like a slender licking tongue.

line 1587, —and made as much impression as a fly alighting on the proverbial wheel.

line 2254, For answer Verena flung herself on him like a Bar-K boy bulldogging a Texas yearling.

WOMEN ARE WISER, by Frank R. Adams. Case No. 11.

line 97, Roger had a duck's-back sort of conscience. (another way of saying he had a conscience like a duck's back.)

line 138, Faith felt as if she were appearing before the Supreme Court whenever she entered Mr. John Brennon's presence. Mr. Brennon, senior, always reminded Faith of a Pilgrim landing on a Plymouth Rock—and pulverizing it. He was the embodiment of stern and dignified virtue.

line 195, This was illustrated by the fact that although his wife was in the room she said nothing, but sat, a little twinkling figure on a straight chair near the wall, much as if she were an office boy awaiting orders.

line 204, She felt a little as if the proceedings ought to be opened with prayer.

line 207, Mr. Brennon was dressed as meticulously as a hanging judge—

line 635, Acted kind of sorry for me and apologetic as if he had been putting a little cyanide in my tonsil alcohol.

GENTILITY, by Thomas Beer. Case No. 13.

line 217, He yawned and turned the key under the glass knob which looked so pleasantly like ice against the green wood, and was even a little cool in his palm when he shut his hand on it.

line 276, The river below the orchard made a little sound as though the water tired of pebbles and flat rocks.

line 853, —and he looked exactly like a doll baby.

line 862, —he's hard as wire.

line 1320, My head's like a teakettle awready.

THE HAUNTED LADY, by Adela Rogers St. John. Case No. 14.

line 25, —she sat there, taut as a wire that has been stretched and stretched little by little—

line 347, —and that she still wore long flung about her like some lace mantilla such as her grandmothers might have worn.

line 595, —and Gretchen his wife, whose name was like a star among the Japanese lanterns of the women of her set.

line 1152, His face was set like a mask,—

line 1028, —and now the scarlet bow of her lips was plainly painted like a scarlet letter upon her white face—

line 1043, She looked, this orange and white lady, with that impudent orange hat pulled so rakishly over her right eye, like a woman who knows that she has just signed her own death warrant.

line 1059, —and giving forth riotous guffaws like a fourteen year old schoolboy.

line 1248, As Barney had predicted, the afternoon paper had exploded in Santa Barbara and Montecito like a bombshell. Every now and then between games, that rushing, sibilant roar, like the hissing of many serpents, swept the fashionable throng.

line 1303, She knew they were there, like horrible creatures in a nightmare.

THE MUMMY, by John Galsworthy. Case No. 19.

line 32, —the ebbing vitality of his body, ribby as a greyhound's.

line 47. He looked a little like a Red Indian;

line 251, —and time passed like a game that is played.

line 647, The violent distemper of that season came down like a wolf on his pups;—

line 832, A stab went through his breast-bones—it "hurt like steam!"

line 834, still as a mummy.

CLAIRE AND THE DANGEROUS MAN, by Fannie Kilbourne. Case No. 21.

line 63, —as truly naïve as a three-year-old,—

line 72, An effect as hopeless as it was whole-hearted.

line 83, D. E. Gibson, who was as conventional as a small-city banker,—

line 93, And all the time she was as safe as she could have been with an amused and indulgent grandfather.

line 205, And yet, in those five days he had ruined little Ruth Wilson as devastatingly as any movie villain could have done.

line 252, —whose manners, after Bahmer's suave ease, seemed those of a frolicsome baboon.

line 588, The opening of a game of this sort is as full of conventional signals as a bridge play. His remark had been like leading the nine of spades—

line 1110, —head of lettuce as firm as a young cabbage;—

line 1202, —and with this table it's like eating at sea in a hard wind.

METAPHORS

THE COP AND THE ANTHEM, by O. Henry. Case No. 2.

line 99, Soapy left his bench and strolled out of the square and across the level sea of asphalt, where Broadway and Fifth Avenue flow together.

line 282, With the young woman playing the clinging ivy to his oak Soapy walked past the policeman overcome with gloom.

SPARE PARTS, by Frank R. Adams. Case No. 3.

line 72, Love may not always last, but it is wonderful as a scaffolding while the building is being put up.

line 280, Sally was absolutely unscrupulous the way she attached men to her with bonds of service.

line 311, Carson ignored her undercuts, and came back with what he evidently considered a knockout blow.

THE ESCAPE OF MR. TRIMM, by Irvin S. Cobb. Case No. 5.

line 497, What he saw was many shifting feet and a hedge of legs shutting him in closely—

SUNK, by George F. Worts. Case No. 6.

line 90, The old man was standing with his legs apart, his body slightly bent, the cigar half raised to his mouth—a frozen gesture.

PARADISE ISLAND, by Will Payne. Case No. 7.

line 62, And this general blur—still and vague, but shut in — seemed to sanction the idea which had exploded in Dwyer's mind; seemed to blindfold the world and hold its ears for him.

line 163, —his heart hammering at his ribs.

line 746, And there was the leech again, softly clinging to him, not to be shaken off.

line 752, His mind turned to Kendrick, not as to a straw at which a drowning man clutches, but as to a raft.

line 770, This mere mouse of a man had the lightning in his hand.

line 869, But this was only the poor cocoon, soon to be abandoned.

THE HAUNTED LADY, by Adela Rogers St. John. Case No. 14.

line 911, But all the time, strangely, the mist seemed to be clearing from her brain.

CLAIRE AND THE DANGEROUS MAN, by Fannie Kilbourne. Case No. 21.

line 457, He was canny enough to build him a good seaworthy craft and sail to success with the wind and the tide.

line 1187, A very simple person, this Bahmer seemed, with all the doors of his mind standing wide open, hospitable to any vagrant wind of thought.

PERSONIFICATIONS

THE ADVENTURE OF ULYSSES, by Charles Lamb. Case No. 1.

line 327, —so loud that all the cavern broke into claps like thunder.

THE COP AND THE ANTHEM, by O. Henry. Case No. 2.

line 10, A dead leaf fell in Soapy's lap. That was Jack Frost's card. Jack is kind to the regular denizens of Madison Square, and gives fair warning of his annual call. At the corners of four streets he hands his pasteboard to the North Wind, footman of the mansion of All Outdoors, so that the inhabitants thereof may make ready.

line 207, Neatly upon his left ear on the callous pavement two waiters pitched Soapy.

line 391, For there drifted out to Soapy's ears sweet music that caught and held him transfixed against the convolutions of the iron fence.

SUNK, by George F. Worts. Case No. 6.

line 89, The Terwilliger library became terribly still.

PARADISE ISLAND, by Will Payne. Case No. 7.

line 48, —above the sea, which seemed to have stopped and to lie gray, motionless, waiting for something to happen.

line 920, —a dike of sand which time might solidify into rock;—

WESTERN STUFF, by Mary Brecht Pulver. Case No. 10.

line 11, —the water bottle and glass on the dresser clicked their heels in salute,—

line 429, —where virility still snatches virtue from the arms of villainy—

line 1430, Little silver slippers peeped beneath her lace skirt—

WOMEN ARE WISER, by Frank R. Adams. Case No. 11.

line 596, Nature puts age into our hearts at birth just as she keeps spring always burning in the hearts of men.

GENTILITY, by Thomas Beer. Case No. 13.

line 276, The river below the orchard made a little sound as though the water tired of pebbles and flat rocks.

line 280, Earth yawned, he thought, at the promise of another weary day,—

line 358, —the crooked purple scar that roamed his ribs,—

line 713, —his romantic socks announced in determined red and green stripes that he was hopelessly vulgar.

line 772, Dawn rose in color behind the water tower's plain gauntness and new light—

THE HAUNTED LADY, by Adela Rogers St. John. Case No. 14.

line 296, It was a glorified bungalow,—rambling about among the live oaks and the yuccas and the stiff little palms,—

THE MUMMY, by John Galsworthy. Case No. 19.

line 645, Nature took the matter out of his hands before he had made the effort of decision.

In discussing the task of the writer I have taken the attitude that his work falls into a number of problems of craftsmanship. His great task is to present a story to his reader in a number of scenes, in such a way that the reader gets some illusion of reality and feels the emotions that the writer wishes him to feel. He must begin, then, by creating an impression of reality in regard to the stimuli to which the actors respond, in regard to the actors themselves, and in regard to the exterior responses of the actors, through their pantomime, their speech, and their actions. All this is descriptive writing, and is dependent for its success upon the writers' capacity to appeal to the senses of his readers in such a way as to cause an *impression.* It is descriptive or *impressionistic* writing.

The more the writer is able to present his scenes in the dramatic form of interchanges, the less he need depend upon *impressionistic* writing. But, nevertheless, even with the most dramatic interchange, it is sometimes necessary to explain motive behind spoken words which would, without the explanation, give the reader the wrong concept of the character of the speaker. The motive behind the speech or action may be more important than the speech or action itself. It is here that danger of dullness lies. Explanation is an appeal to the intellect; and every appeal to the intellect must cause the intellect to push aside the emotions for the time being. Material appealing to the intellect is most often the material of the non-fiction writer. Material that appeals to the senses is the material of the fiction-writer.

In dealing with the material of the non-fiction writer (with explanatory matter aimed at the intellect) the fiction writer must appease the senses, and must keep up the illusion that this material is also directed at the senses, by *using the method of fiction,* for non-fiction material. He must present his explanatory comment as much as possible *impressionistically,* and above all, *pictorially.*

A knowledge of structure is especially helpful to the fiction writer in the mastering of this problem. For it is the greatest problem he can possibly encounter. All others dwindle to nothingness in comparison with this one. If a writer cannot so present his material that it will arouse interest in the reader, everything else is worthless. To do this he must depend upon words and sentences, the immemorial tools of the writer. But just as a carpenter realizes that he will use tools for hewing beams quite different from those he will use for delicate moldings about a china closet, so the fiction craftsman knows that the demands upon his skill in writing the fifth step of a scene are different demands from those of the first four steps.

It is in presenting the fifth step of a scene that the writer must resort especially to the subterfuge of convincing the reader that the appeal of explanatory comment is no different from the appeal of really impressionistic detail. More than ever is this so when there is a long fifth step. The fifth step deals with the effect upon the actors. Upon the clear presentation to the reader of this effect may depend the whole illusion of reality that the reader will experience from the story. His emotion in regard to the story may have been only partially aroused by the first four steps of the scene. If the fifth step fails to inflame the little spark of interest already aroused by the first four steps of the scene, the fire of his interest will not have sufficient heat to carry him over to the next scene.

In writing a story you are trying to arouse a fire of enthusiastic interest in the reader. Each scene is like a tree in a forest-fire. It forms the fuel for the fire. Between it and the next tree the fire is carried along by the fifth step, the step

which explains the effect upon the actors of the previous scene. If the intervening space is barren of fuel the fire will probably die out. If the fuel is good the fire will continue to burn, and if the next tree is also good fuel the accumulated fire will be hot and vigorous.

The Chinese have a motto which reads "One picture is worth a hundred thousand words." In approaching the subject of style, the short-story writer would do well to sear these words into his memory. In order to avail himself fully of the lesson they teach, he must first learn to think in terms of fiction. He must try to approach his material with the idea in mind that it is to be rendered as much as possible in impressions. This will help him very much. He will then be utilizing the seventh device for arousing interest, as indicated upon the chart accompanying the Lecture upon the Laws of Interest. He will be creating an impression through an unusual conception of the apparently usual, by comparison or imagery. Every other consideration of style must be subordinate to this for the writer of fiction. If he cannot convey *impressions* fiction writing is not for him. If his tendency is to be explanatory without being impressionistic, he will be agreeably surprised to see how much more lively his explanations will become when rendered in terms of images or comparisons.

The principles which I want you to grasp from a study of this Lecture are these:—

1. Wherever possible cast your scenes in dramatic form—interchange.
2. Go over the dialogue to make sure that it is clear.
3. If possible make all interpolations in terms of images or comparisons.
4. Especially in the fifth step of a scene, make your comments clear through images and comparison. Do not hesitate to make a long fifth step if by so doing you can develop the imaginative or dramatic quality of your story.
5. In the first two steps of the scene—The Meeting and the

Purpose impressionistic rendering is vitally important. The stimulus must be rendered as real for the reader as it is for the actor. The appearance of the actor will help toward the total impression of reality.

Problem 8

WINNING THE READER

"I do not like thee Dr. Fell;
The reason why I cannot tell;
But this I know, I know full well
I do not like thee Dr. Fell."

This little verse is one which every reader can use as a bludgeon upon the head of any writer's conceit. There is, as Mrs. Gerould says so aptly, no answer to boredom. There is likewise no answer to the reader who says in regard to one of the characters in your story, and primarily in regard to the main character of your story, "I do not like thee Dr. Fell." The reader does not have to explain to you, the author, why he dislikes the actor. The fact that he does is sufficient. More stories are refused because the author insists upon writing about actors with whom the reader cannot feel any sympathy than for any other reason. Because the reader cannot feel any sympathy for the actor he is unable to work up any enthusiasm over the situation confronting the actor. If the unlikable person is in a difficulty, the reader instead of wishing that person to get out of the difficulty, is, on the contrary, rather pleased to find him in such a state. Perhaps one of the simplest classifications which you can make of actors to be used in your story is a classification of likable and unlikable. There will be, of course, variations of liking or disliking, but the general classification is a good one to keep in mind. We are given, in this country, as in England, to avoid the direct word. We say, usually, like and dislike, when what we mean is some variation of love and hate. Love and hate are the subtler kinds of emotion for which there is a fundamental classification made by psychologists, who call such subtle emo-

tions "sentiments." As far as you, as a writer, are concerned there are three of these:

1. Love 2. Hate

and diametrically opposed and in between, and capable of becoming either, is

3. Self-love.

Self-love demands that everything shall be done for it. As soon as the person who is a self-loving person finds that another is willing to contribute to that self-love, the sentiment for that second person becomes love. If, on the other hand, the self-loving person discovers that the object of his interest is unwilling to contribute to self-love, then the interest turns to hatred.

Very commonly people will tell you with great solemnity that every reader identifies himself or herself with the main character in the short-story. It is my belief that this is not the case. It is my belief that while sometimes the stories are read because the situation is one in which a reader might find himself or herself, the reader's interest is not in the character as being a replica of himself or herself so much as in finding a solution for the problem which the reader might apply to that problem. Very seldom indeed do readers identify themselves entirely with the characters in the stories. They often identify their friends, and they often become intensely partisan for the character; but it is my firm belief, and I base this upon a great deal of observation and upon questioning of a great many readers whose responses, I think, were sincere and honest, that readers as a rule are, like Olympian Joves, surveying the scene.

The sentiment of self-love scarcely enters at all into the composition of the reader of a short-story. The reader of a short-story is in a peculiar and magnanimous position; he will either love or hate the actors in the story. He will not identify himself as somebody to be loved or hated. He may envy the character in a story; he may look with contempt upon one and

with pleasure upon another; but I am quite convinced that he does not think of himself as being the actor in the story.

Of course, it is possible to divorce any one task of the writer of a short-story completely from all of the other tasks. It is impossible to say that in thinking of winning your reader you must lose sight of all thought of narrative; all thought of impression, or all thought of drama. On the contrary, all these things are closely tied up together. In doing one, you frequently achieve the other. That is why, in considering the question of winning the reader's sympathy, or sympathetic admiration for the chief actor in your story, you are interested not entirely in this phase of craftsmanship. It is really forced upon you by the necessity of the form. The short-story is a narrative problem. It is about a person who has a problem to solve. In order that the reader may become interested in the solution of the problem, particularly in the story of accomplishment, it is essential first that you win his interest for the actor. There cannot be any suspense in his mind in regard to whether or not Tom Jones wins the girl unless he wants Tom Jones to win the girl, or conversely, he wants Tom Jones not to win the girl, in which case Tom Jones is not a hero but a villain; he is not a likable character but an unlikable character.

You have always to keep in mind the reader. He has to be kept interested. He will be interested in proportion to your success in creating an illusion of reality to the extent which you make him believe in any or all of the actors in your story. Now, it is clear to you by this time that any character in your story is, to you as an author, a collection of traits. You have learned further in your consideration of this subject that conduct is the expression in action of some trait of character, and is most likely to indicate, in a crisis, the main trend of character, or the main character trait. You know further that if you cannot make the conduct display the trait, you must, as author, step in and interpret the responses of the character in such a way that the trait which you wish to show becomes evident. A man's conduct may show evidences of any trait which you wish him to possess. He may appear to be, for example,

bigoted.....	on the	other	hand	he may be	.....broad-minded
grasping	"	"	"	"	.....lavish
intolerant	"	"	"	"	.....tolerant
irascible	"	"	"	"	.....placid
malevolent	"	"	"	"	.....benevolent
materialistic	"	"	"	"	.....altruistic
crafty	"	"	"	"	.....ingenuous
cruel	"	"	"	"	.....kind
illogical	"	"	"	"	.....logical
treacherous	"	"	"	"	.....loyal

But whatever traits the character possesses will be given to him or taken away from him by you, the author, who creates him. The traits of a character are to a writer what the ingredients of his medicine are to the pharmacist. Knowing that character is made up of different traits, you have the key to winning the regard of your reader for your character, or of causing your reader to dislike that character. You will always be able to foretell with some degree of accuracy the reaction of your reader to the display of any trait by any actor.

This brings us to another consideration in regard to the sentiments. They are either interested or disinterested. If they are interested they are directed toward self-indulgence or self-preservation. If they are disinterested they are directed toward race-preservation or the preservation of others. You are always safe in regarding your reader as a person who is disinterested; that is to say, as one who is interested in race-preservation; one who likes to see virtue triumph and vice fail. If your writing is to have distinction it must have a touch of elevation; it must arouse those sentiments which are primarily disinterested. In regard to your characters, what you wish is to arouse in the reader these fundamental sentiments of love and hate, with the varying gradations toward liking and disliking.

The reader is simply a human-being. His reactions toward any person or any action can be judged or predicted only upon the supposition that those reactions are normal; that the reader will be attracted by interesting and likable characters and that

he will be bored by uninteresting, dull and commonplace characters, and further, that he will actively dislike, even to the extent of hating, those characters who do things which are not desirable. Fundamentally, however, he will make your task easy by identifying the actors in your story as people he knows. He will frequently go even further and see the person as the man he might have been or the woman he might have been, provided that character or actor be admirable. The struggles of that actor will be his struggles, the character's successes will make him gloat. He will share the character's hopes, fears, struggles, failures and triumphs; and for that reason you will be careful that you typify your characters, that they shall be people who might easily have been met with in the course of a day's journey. Again you see the importance of observation, because observation comes before interpretation.

In observing a character's actions or responses, what you as a short-story writer must say to yourself is something like this: "Now, what emotions did that arouse in me? What was my response toward that actor? Did I like him, or did I dislike him? What was it about his actions that made me dislike or like that actor?" Further than this you will ask yourself: "Would my readers feel as I do? That is to say, is there anything in my special attitude which renders me not a competent person to judge impartially?" The answer is that your readers will feel towards your characters as you feel if you have prepared their minds and brought to their attention only such aspects of the action as would cause the sentiment you wish to arouse. You arrange the circumstances. You are primarily a propagandist. If you wish to show that a character is *deceitful,* you must make his actions show deceit. If the actions do not show deceit you must show that there was a deceitful motive behind the apparently sincere action. You may go even further than that. You are not interested so much in conduct as in the hidden springs of conduct; in the significance of conduct as it discloses traits of character. You may wish to show that under certain circumstances defeat is justifiable and even praiseworthy, just as you may wish

to show than an action which is apparently cruel is not actually so.

There is a very simple formula which will help you over this greatest difficulty of the amateur short-story writer. The formula is this: that likable characters are those whose actions spring from a motive of race-preservation. Unlikable characters are those whose actions spring from a motive of self-indulgence or self-preservation. Here is an obvious example: Ordinarily, if you were to show as a stimulus to which your actor was to respond, a crippled dog, you would, if you wished to show a cruel person, cause the actor to respond to that stimulus by kicking the crippled dog. It is entirely possible, however, to have your actor kick this crippled dog and at the same time have him a likable instead of an unlikable character. For example, if this man had been shown by you always to have been afraid of dogs; if one of the greatest terrors of his life was a dog of this kind, you could cause him to kick the crippled dog and have him likable, provided you showed that at the time he became aware of this crippled dog he also became aware of a child or a woman who was in deadly danger from the attacks of that dog who was, besides being crippled, also very rabid. Then, if he summoned up all his courage and kicked the crippled dog in order to drive it away from the child or the woman, he would be performing an act dictated not by self-indulgence or an instinct of self-preservation, but an act which was desirable because dictated by an instinct for race-preservation, or the preservation of others.

Winning your reader's admiration for your actor is in general a very simple problem. Suppose you decide to cause in your reader a sentiment of sympathetic admiration for one of your actors. You determine in advance the traits which will cause the reader to feel for your character a sympathetic admiration; and since conduct is the expression in action of these traits, you show the actor's *actions.*

What traits will cause this sympathetic admiration? There are a great many, some more desirable than others. The character may be gay, he may be humorous, he may be a sportsman,

he may be an honest man, he may be a modest fellow. It makes no difference, just so long as the character traits which his conduct reflects are those which will cause sympathetic admiration. If his actions need interpretation, you must be sure to interpret sufficiently. This lack of interpretation is perhaps one of the greatest means of causing a reader to lose interest in your character and, therefore, interest in your story. He cannot become interested in what happens to Bill Jones if he doesn't like Bill Jones. Always, however, you must, wherever possible, show characters in action. You cannot show them unless you observe them. You cannot translate your observation fully unless you have the capacity to differentiate between those responses which are caused by race-preservation and those which are caused by an instinct for self-preservation or self-indulgence. In order to be really successful, you must be able to cause in your reader a feeling that can, as O. Henry put it, "take you by the throat like the quincy." It is this capacity for causing the reader to feel toward his characters as the author wishes him to feel that distinguishes the great artists. Shakespeare had it! Remember in "Romeo and Juliet," Mercutio, wounded and dying, when answering an inquiry about the extent of his wounds says:

> " 'Tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door
> But 'tis enough, 'twill serve."

How can we fail to admire such sportsmanship? Remember also in "Henry V." The boastful ne'er-do-well Pistol, after he had been cudgeled by his enemies before his fellow officers in the army, still rises above circumstances. He's a crook; but despite that we admire his gameness. He can't be downed. Picking himself up he limps away. Already, in the midst of defeat, a new plan is forming in his mind:

> "Patches I'll get unto these cudgeled scars,
> And swear I had them in the Gallic Wars."

One of the soundest criticisms which any reader can make of any story, particularly of any actor in a story, is "I do not like,

or I did not like that person." This is one of the oldest of criticisms and one of the most devastating. Away back in the early Eighteenth Century, Richardson, the novelist, wrote "Pamela." It was the story of Pamela Andrews, who preserved her virtue against all assaults, and finally ended happily by marrying Squire B. . . . The book caused a tremendous flutter all over Europe. It was the best-seller of its time. Almost everybody wrote to Richardson, congratulating him upon having written the story. It was a series of adventures in which Pamela came out well. Then there appeared Joseph Fielding, who punctured the whole bubble of the Richardsonian reputation by pointing out that although Pamela won Squire B, whom Fielding called "Squire Booby," Squire Booby was not worth winning.

A great many very clever plots are spoiled for readers by this same fault in modern short-stories. An amateur writer will bring in to a critic a good plot—that is to say, it is no worse than a great many other plots. He will have a very attractive young man, and he will have a problem or feat of accomplishment which is interesting enough to hold the interest; but he will spoil the whole story and lose the reader's interest by causing the girl to be a very unattractive and unlikable character. This fault is one to be guarded against most carefully. A writer will present a young girl, who is the prize in the story. She is to be won by the young man. The writer will then present this girl being impudent to her mother, grasping in her relations with her father, dictatorial and selfish, or at least self-centered in her relations to the young man, and not infrequently, quite stupid in her reactions toward the various happenings of the story.

Even though the reader may be carried along by the plot of the story, he is left uncomfortable at the end by feeling that the girl was not worth winning—that the prize was not worth all the labor, and that he feels sorry for the young man because he is linked to such a woman.

Another fault, and one which causes perhaps more rejections even than the other, is that the main actor, who is shown setting

out to accomplish some feat, does not win the reader's sympathy, and therefore, the reader cannot have any interest in his success because the actual thing itself is undesirable. This necessity of arousing the reader's liking; of winning the reader's sympathy early in your story is a very, very important one. Never lose sight of the fact that the modern short-story is essentially a story of a likable character who, in the story of accomplishment, is setting out to win some prize of which you approve, and is kept from doing so, or delayed at least, by the presence of some person or some obstacle of which you disapprove. The modern short-story is essentially a story of two characters, one likable and the other unlikable. The likable one is desirous of winning a prize. This prize may be, and often is, a girl. In the case of the woman main character, it frequently develops that the prize is a man; but the fact remains that the story is a story of one character of whom you approve, in conflict, or in a series of conflicts with one or more forces of which you disapprove, in an attempt to win a prize of which you also approve.

Keep in mind always that you may be interested in the plot of a story when you do not always sympathize with the chief character. There is a certain type story called the Picaresque, or rogue story, from the old Spanish word "Picaro." In such a story your reader merely accepts the fact that such people exist. He does not question their morality; that is taken for granted. "The Cop And The Anthem" is a case in point. What the reader is interested in, primarily, is not so much Soapy as the attempts which Soapy makes to bring about his purpose. Yet, in doing this, Soapy is not ever caused to do things of which the reader would disapprove sentimentally. He may disapprove morally, but his sentiments remain favorable toward Soapy, because the things that Soapy does do not include anything unkind or cruel. In "The Adventures of Ulysses," Ulysses does certain things which would not be strictly according to Hoyle, but he does them against a villain who is so undesirable that almost any action of Ulysses would be accepted as desirable in contrast.

A discussion of "The Escape of Mr. Trimm" will bring up at once the question as to the undesirable character, because Mr. Trimm is certainly not a desirable character. This is an interesting story, because in the end the villain is defeated. In this case the reader never for a moment wants Mr. Trimm to succeed. He is always hoping that he will not succeed, because the things that Mr. Trimm does are dictated entirely by an instinct for self-preservation and never for race-preservation. For that reason the reader is always opposed to his success. This is a clear case of a defeat being, as far as the reader is concerned, a happy ending. He never wishes Mr. Trimm to succeed because Mr. Trimm is not a person whom anybody would care to have at large. In "Spare Parts" the hero, Monte English, is virtually in the same case as Ulysses, because he is opposed to a villainous person; a person whose instincts are entirely those of self-indulgence or self-preservation. Monte's reactions are always those of race-preservation or the preservation of others. The same thing is true of Jake Bolton. In "Once And Always," the thing that Gideon Higsbee wishes to do wins for him the sympathy of the reader. Whatever he may have been before, in this crisis of his career his instinct is that of race-preservation, even though it springs basically from the desire to ease his conscience. It is a good thing to do and it shows that he must have sound instincts or his conscience would not bother him. In "Sunk," although Jason Terwilliger is shown at first as an undesirable character, willing to do anything for money, it is made clear before the close of the story that he was not in his right senses when he agreed to do this monstrous thing. In Paradise Island, Dwyer is like Mr. Trimm. We wish to see him defeated, and eventually he is. The things that he does spring from a desire entirely for self-preservation.

In the story of decision this instinct for race-preservation as opposed to an instinct for self-indulgence or self-preservation makes the story. It is the struggle between these two instincts which makes the uncertainty as to the outcome. In "Jetsam," Junius Peabody is struggling between his opportunity to profit and his standard of conduct, although as a matter of fact, there

is no struggle whatever actually shown. The eventual decision is one which the reader can applaud. Race-preservation triumphs over the opportunity to profit. In "Shadowed," the Senator chooses the path that will disappoint him rather than to bring disappointment to the woman. In "Women Are Wiser," the wife chooses to forego the opportunity of castigating her husband. In "Gentility," Stukeley chooses to risk the good name of the family rather than to turn loose upon the community this crook who sells dope to children. In "The Haunted Lady," Gretchen Innes chooses what she thinks is degradation for herself rather than to go on cheating her husband. In "The Trouble With Men," Gertrude chooses to admit to her husband the loss of her reputation rather than to permit him to suffer as he does in the belief that she lies to him. In "Shoddy," Martin Claypool chooses the loss of nearly a million dollars rather than abandon a standard of conduct.

When you come to a consideration of the Parallel Decision type of story you will find the first departure from this formula. The linking of the parallel scenes is formed by the Moral or other Significance of their resemblance.

Such stories are in almost every respect a higher type of art than the stories for which the greatest demand exists. But that is a condition which exists, and it must therefore be recognized.

More pertinent however, just now, is the consideration that it is likely that for a long period of time you will not possess the requisite craftsmanship to produce these more important stories. You can feel safe in saying that the progress of the average writer of short stories will follow these courses. First he learns to write the Story of Accomplishment in its simplest form. From this he progresses to a more artistically developed form of the Story of Accomplishment, adding to it an element of Moral or Esthetic significance. Feeling not quite satisfied with this he reaches toward greater expression through the Story of Decision. Only when he has mastered this second type completely does he reach toward the third type, the Story of Parallel Decisions, in which the chief interest is in the signi-

ficance. After that there is left for him only the final form of the novel. Ordinarily, however, people who are successful in producing one type of story, finding that there is a demand from editors for more work of a similar quality, find a niche in producing that type. But the first step is to remember that in most stories the reader's interest comes from his partisanship interest in a likable character.

Problem 9

THE EFFECT—CAUSING EMOTION

"Make 'em laugh
Make 'em weep
Make 'em wait."

Playwrights' Motto.

As soon as you begin to consider emotional effect, you begin a consideration of psychology. There are almost as many "schools" of psychology as there are psychologists, and each "school" uses different classifications of emotions. Merely as a point of departure, I shall take the classification made by a distinguished English psychologist. According to him, the strong emotions are the elemental or primary emotions, common to all animals, human and other. I shall ask you to consider from the point of view of the fiction-writer five of these so-called primary emotions:

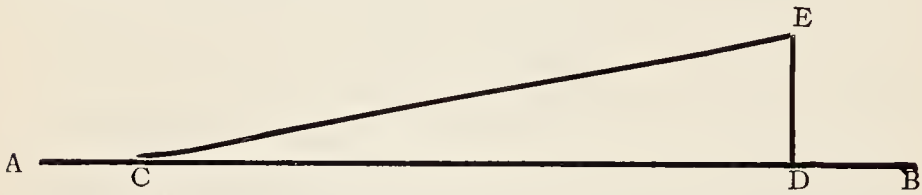
1. Anger
2. Fear
3. Hope
4. Joy
5. Sorrow

These classifications you may or may not agree with. I do not ask you to accept them for any purpose other than our common reference while you are studying this course, that keeping them in mind will help you to understand the problem confronting you as a craftsman.

You must always keep the reader in mind. He must have his interest captured, and then it must be held. You will be

successful in proportion as you create an illusion of reality; you must achieve verisimilitude or the appearance of reality. The reader needs this, because he is bored. Life as he sees it is dull. He asks you, as an author, to show him a phase of it that is enlivening. What you offer him must *seem* real.

In grasping clearly what is involved in working upon the emotions of your reader, you may be helped by reverting to the simple diagram to which I called your attention when you first embarked upon this course.



A—B is all time, flowing along upon the ordinary humdrum level of existence. Out of that time you take a limited period, —the line C—D. You present an actor to your reader, who is enlivened by his interest in the actions of that actor in his attempts to solve a narrative problem, to such an extent that he is raised from the ordinary humdrum level of emotion to a new emotional height, marked E. During the time it takes him to read the story, he is no longer bored; he is interested in some one else. Mark well that conception of your reader as one in sympathy with your leading actor, or at the very least, neutral; certainly not alienated from your leading actor. He demands first of all to be freed from boredom. But you are dealing with what salesmen would call a "willing prospect." The reader wants to be sold. He wants to take sides. He is a God upon Olympus. He is abstract justice, being on the side of good and against evil. His emotions are *disinterested,* not *interested.* He is not occupied by his own problem, but by the problem of another. It is often to escape his own problem that he reads about the problem of another. He feels instead of *sorrow* that variant of *sorrow* which is *pity,* or sorrow not for oneself, but for another. Pity is *disinterested sorrow,* and *sorrow* is one of the five primary emotions:

1. Anger
2. Fear
3. Hope
4. Joy
5. Sorrow

Therefore, keeping in mind this Olympian reader whose emotions are always *disinterested,* the primary emotions with which you as a fiction writer are concerned are

1. Anger
2. Fear
3. Hope
4. Joy
5. Sorrow

These are not by any means all the emotions with which you will deal. To discuss all of the possible emotions and the variants which are possible is a task for a psychologist. These will merely serve to indicate the inescapable minimum of emotions with which you must be familiar. What you *must* master is a method of arousing *unfailingly* these fundamental or primary emotions.

To be in control of this method of arousing *unfailingly* in the reader the primary emotions of anger, fear, hope, joy, and sorrow, it is necessary only to know what causes such emotions in the normal human being, and to arrange your circumstances accordingly. You cannot assume any departure from normalcy. For normal people, the formula has been worked out in human relations since time immemorial. From babyhood to senility, in human (and, in fact, in other animals) behavior has been observed, and conclusions drawn with these definite results: an animal, human or otherwise is

angry when opposed
fearful when it anticipates frustration
hopeful when it anticipates satisfaction
joyful when satisfied
sorrowful when frustrated

More and more as you make an investigation of the whole subject of short-story craftsmanship you will be struck by the discovery that the mastery of one phase of production will bring about a mastery of other phases. You set out to cause an emotional reaction in your reader by presenting a character in action. In order that the reader may feel fear on behalf of the hero he must be made aware of possible frustration, which means that he must be aware of a purpose which can be defeated. To feel vicarious anger, he must be aware of an affront. The bringing together of two forces is the first step of a scene. The indication of a purpose actuating one of these people is the second step of a scene. Everything the opponent does thereafter in that scene is an attempt to prevent the hero from accomplishing his object. It achieves narrative interest, but it also achieves emotional interest by arousing the reader's anger at the opponent, and his fear because he anticipates frustration for the hero. Thus in setting out to achieve emotional interest you achieve narrative interest, and find yourself writing a scene.

Everything the hero does to accomplish his purpose in that scene has a narrative interest, because it is a furtherance within the scene. It also arouses an emotional reaction of hope in the consciousness of the reader, because he anticipates satisfaction for the hero in the accomplishment of the scene purpose. This purpose in every scene must be kept before the reader because the alternating actions of the hero and the opponent furnish narrative turning points of furtherance and hindrance within the scene. Because of this the reader is conscious of an alternation of the emotions of hope and fear. Thus you achieve narrative curiosity which is suspense, or curiosity plus expectancy. Likewise you find yourself achieving dramatic interest, because in the first and second steps of the scene you have made clear that there is promise of conflict; and in the third step (the interchange between the hero and the opposing force) you have made the two forces clash.

Joy and sorrow are possible choices of emotion open to you. The first (joy) the reader feels when he realizes that at the

close of an interchange the hero is successful. The second (sorrow) he feels when he realizes that at the close of an interchange the hero has met defeat. In either case the suspense gives way to certainty. The reader feels either joy or sorrow only when he realizes that the interchange is over. There must be a conclusive act. Through that conclusive act you achieve narrative interest. It is the fourth step of a scene. Because it is disaster or its avoidance you also achieve dramatic interest. Because the reader feels either joy or sorrow you achieve emotional interest.

In all scenes but the last one in your story the conclusive act of the scene will be conclusive only in regard to the narrative question of that scene. But—and this you cannot for a moment disregard—it is in regard to the main narrative question of your story, inconclusive. Your sense of narrative plot value will guide you to the entent that it will cause you to keep the reader in suspense as to the outcome of the story as a whole, as long as possible. Thus you will be led by your narrative sense to make the conclusive act of *all scenes except the last* a defeat for the hero. The defeat must be through no fault of his own. If the demand for plausibility requires a temporary success in achieving the scene purpose, make clear in the fifth step that the hero is living in the shadow of ultimate frustration. In this way you keep the reader in sympathy with your hero by causing the hero's responses to be actuated by the instinct for race preservation at the same time that you arouse in the consciousness of the reader the most elevated and disinterested emotion of which human beings are capable of feeling, the emotion of pity, which is sorrow for the defeat or frustration of another. You allow him besides, at the close of your story, when the hero has at last succeeded, to feel complete, unalloyed, and justifiable joy because the satisfaction comes after the accumulation of temporary defeats or frustrations at the close of each scene have for the time being rendered the possibility of success very remote and for that reason extremely laudable.

The advice "Make 'em laugh; make 'em weep; make 'em

wait" is as sound for the short-story writer as it is for the dramatist to whom it was originally proffered. It assumes, naturally, a familiarity with material, an ability to cast it into a pattern or plot, and a knowledge of impressionistic, narrative, dramatic, and emotional values. Making 'em wait is a purely narrative problem. Making 'em laugh and making 'em weep is a problem in causing emotion. A knowledge of materials is not enough. Separately lying in your files, plot outlines, characterizations, and settings are of no use. Recognizing, classifying and arranging material is an important part of craftsmanship. But it is only a part. True craftsmanship lies in the combination of these materials in such a way as to cause in the consciousness of the reader the impressionistic and emotional effect you wish. If you cannot cause an emotional reaction, you cannot write successfully. A knowledge of the potentialities of your material is not enough: you must develop them for the reader. This advice to "make 'em laugh; make 'em weep" goes back to Flaubert.

Flaubert, talking to Maupassant of the task of the writer, says, "The public is composed of numerous groups who cry to us,

> 'Console me,
> Amuse me,
> Make me sad,
> Make me sympathetic,
> Make me dream,
> Make me laugh,
> Make me shudder,
> Make me weep,
> Make me think' "

All but one of the groups named by Flaubert is a group that wishes its emotions worked upon. The dissenting group, the one that cries "Make me think," is a negligibly small group among the readers of short-stories. While the vast majority will be interested in the significance which the writer can extract from his story, the significance is to them a by-product,

and their chief reason for reading fiction is, bluntly, to avoid boredom. To most readers, fiction is an escape from life. It goes without saying that fiction must be interesting, but because readers turn from life to fiction and lose themselves in it, it presents a splendid opportunity for the propagandist. Upon such a one rests a grave responsibility of presenting to his reader the semblance of truth. What significance you seek to present in your writing is your purely personal concern. Here, your artistic conscience will be your guide.

But whether you write merely to entertain, or in addition to entertaining, to instruct, your main purpose is to lift the reader from the ordinary humdrum, level of emotion to a new emotional height. You must, therefore, be able to foretell, with reasonable accuracy, the reaction of your reader. You must be able to cast over him a spell, so that he is conscious of an illusion of reality. You propose to stir him emotionally, which means that you must first appeal to his senses, for emotion is the sum of an observer's sensations plus his feeling. The effect you desire will dictate your treatment of your material. Depending upon the special emotional effect you have in mind, you will stress certain elements of your story so that they will contribute to that effect.

Just as there are many different kinds of interest, so there are many different kinds of emotional effect; and as there is seldom an unmixed interest, there is equally seldom an unmixed emotional effect. Within the same scene one incident may cause your reader to pity the abused heroine; another may cause him to become angry at the villain. Sometimes incidents follow one another so swiftly that the reader is torn between anger and pity. But in order that a reader may experience any emotional reaction, he must first have abandoned himself to the spell of the writer, so that he is really transported to the setting in which the writer causes the action to be placed, and is virtually present viewing almost real people, and observing the happenings as if they were actually occurring.

Because your task is to take the reader out of himself, you, as an artist, are compelled to search for an intriguing opening.

You must cause the reader to come under your spell immediately. Furthermore you must *hold* him under your spell until the story is finished. The most effective way you can do this is to cause in him a certain emotional reaction—an emotional effect, an effect you must secure in such a way that the reader is not aware of your method. Your machinery must not creak. Although you are playing with "stacked cards," you must not let your victims see you slip an ace from the bottom of the pack. The more subtle and delicate the impression, the more difficult it is to convey. On the other hand, you must not slop over; if pathos is your object, you must be careful to steer clear of bathos. You must not be like the Boston minister who always produced his handkerchief at the point when he knew he was about to weep. Your structure must be concealed. You are really a prestidigitator. You are concealing something. Therefore, you use the surest method of concealment. You divert the victim's attention. You do not say to him, "Prepare to weep." Instead, you tell him a story. He thinks that his weeping is a by-product. You know better. You know that a normal reader could not have failed to weep. From the very opening paragraphs you chose your incidents, you directed the responses of your characters, you emphasized certain details of setting with the single purpose of making your reader weep at a certain point. If at that point he weeps, you have been successful in causing in him the emotional effect you desired.

You have all seen people fling away a book or a magazine, exclaiming, "Absurd!" "Rubbish!" or "Impossible!" These readers have not come under the spell of the writer; although he undoubtedly caused in them an emotional effect, he failed to cause the emotional effect desired. His failure came about because the readers found some element of the story lacking in plausibility. You may accept as axiomatic, that virtually anything may be made plausible by a competent craftsman through grading of details. It is through an insistence upon and reiteration of that detail that you achieve authenticity. Remember always, of course, that *you* may see a thing clearly, but the

reader does not have the running start and the clarity of vision that you possess; to him, all your characters are strangers. He must be made to believe in them as real people. He may or may not be familiar with the setting of your story. It must give the *impression* you wish. He has to be convinced of the plausibility of the crises you select. In order to achieve Interest you must achieve Plausibility. You, therefore, must *make everything clear to the reader.*

"Don't I leave *anything* for the reader to use his mind upon?" asks the young writer, aghast. The answer is emphatically, "No." *Fiction is not concerned with the mind; it aims at the emotions. It merely placates, by the appearance of authenticity, that portion of the mind which protests at surrendering to the emotions.* Appeal to the mind only when it is necessary to lull its suspicions. You appeal to the intellect only to establish your veracity. If the reader loses this belief in your veracity, he usually loses interest in your story.

Grading is simply anticipating questions of the reader before he has a chance to become doubtful as to the facts. Make everything seem to him to be inevitable. Instead of saying after a man finds a need for a weapon, that a few days ago he had concealed a knife in a convenient place, show him passing by the spot where the knife lay and noticing it. This is what some professional writers call "planting the knife."

Also, when you have said something which may seem incongruous in relation to something you have already stated, be sure instantly to explain this incongruity in order that the reader may not have a chance to become skeptical.

When a reader loses interest in your story, or fails to evince interest, the fault is yours. "There is no answer to boredom."

If you know your materials and can develop their potentialities, you can hold your reader to the very end. To do so it is necessary to keep before you the vision of this reader to be won and held, this willing prospect, his emotions open to any manipulation you desire.

What that emotion is makes no difference. You may desire

to cause in your reader an emotion of tolerance, or sadness, or superiority, or pity, or any other of the whole gamut of feelings. One thing alone is certain: no matter what effect you wish, you must cause it through *craftsmanship*. Sometimes the craftsmanship is spontaneous, almost unconscious; but craftsmanship it is.

You will make your reader see what you want him to see, believe what you want him to believe, and feel what you want him to feel, in proportion to your ability as an artist and craftsman—in your mastery of your materials. The materials will always be the same: happenings selected to illustrate character, setting and narrative crises or turning points. You will seek in combining these, to create a certain *impression* which will contribute toward a definite emotional effect which is apart from the emotion a reader feels in regard to a character's actions. Always, it will be a question of selection. You will discover when we discuss Setting and Character Depiction, that the impression can always be built up by the use of certain devices, and that the writer is always master of his materials.

What is true of the incidents selected by the writer to illustrate setting or to portray character is equally true of those incidents which are selected primarily to contribute to the narrative pattern by showing turning-points or crises of the plot.

You can set down this Law of Selection thus:

> "The incident—the single act of a single force—is the basic presentation unit. The requirement of single narrative-effect in the plot or pattern demands that either alone or combined with other incidents it must form a crisis or turning-point in the plot. It is selected primarily for its plot or narrative interest."

Incidents of crisis must always be selected in such a way that they themselves, in their own right, besides being narrative crises, contribute to an effect upon the reader. In addition they will be such crises or turning points as might logically and plausibly be the outcome of the reactions of a character in the story to the stimuli with which you as a writer

cause him to come in contact. In short, they will be selected so that they will contribute to the impressions, setting and actors, and to the emotional effect and dramatic effect.

Generally speaking, the incidents forming the crises of your story are primarily selected and arranged to cause suspense: to "make 'em wait." In order to "make 'em weep" or "make 'em laugh" or to make 'em experience any other emotional reaction, while you depend to some extent upon the Setting, your chief reliance will be upon the illustration in action, of a character's reaction to a stimulus. Since your final aim in producing a story is to create an emotion, you will think of your plot or pattern of crises as merely a means to that end. That is why I urge you to spend a great deal of time in practicing the outlining of plots, in order that you may lose your awe of plots, that you may see plotting as the simple mechanical process that it is; but particularly that you may come to a realization that no plot is so rigid in its organization that it cannot be changed, in favor of a sound emotional effect.

It is in this selection of the incidents—the happenings of your story—that you will be guided by the consideration of the emotional effect you wish. You are completely in control of this effect. You simply determine in advance the effect you wish, and in the portrayal of those particular happenings you stress those things which contribute definitely to that effect. This emotional effect will not, nor need not, always be unmixed. But, having come to a definite decision in regard to the effect you want, the impression you wish to convey, you use the devices which seem to you best calculated to cause that impression or effect. Two considerations, always, you must keep in mind:

1. If the emotion is subtle, it must be excited by details, artistically sifted in and reiterated.
2. If the emotion is a primary emotion, strong, virile, easily comprehended, then your keynote is restraint.

The emotional effect upon the reader will be caused by:

(a) The action of your actors.
(b) The impression or sense-appeals of your settings.

(c) The turning points in your plot.
(d) Your own explanatory comment.

In aiming at arousing these fundamental emotions, your keynote is restraint. Here is a case where "actions speak louder than words." The facts are enough; no interpretation is necessary. Here is an example from Thackeray's "Vanity Fair": Amelia and George have just been married, and in Brussels she awaits the news from Waterloo.

> "No more firing was heard at Brussels—the pursuit rolled miles away. Darkness came down on the field and the city; and Amelia was praying for George, who was lying on his face, dead, with a bullet through his heart."

Pity wells up in heart of the reader. Here is frustration for Amelia.

Take O. Henry. *He* knew how to get the effect he wanted. In the story, "Between Rounds," when he wished the reader to feel amusement toward one of his characters, an Irishwoman, who was unconsciously humorous, he *showed* the Irishwoman sentimentalizing over the loss of a neighbor's child. This is how O. Henry did it:

> " 'Jawn,' she said, sentimentally, 'Missis Murphy's little bye is lost. 'Tis a great city fer losin' little byes. Six years old he was. Jawn, 'tis the same age our little bye would have been if we'd had one six years ago.' "

And then the trait of combativeness comes to the fore, and the woman and her husband fall to arguing over the name of the little boy, who would have been six years old if he'd been born six years before. And, in reading the scene that follows, the reader experiences emotion after emotion.

As you make progress in the mastery of craftsmanship, you will become more and more aware that the *effect* of your story whether *impression* or *feeling,* will be achieved largely through *character* and *setting.* We have seen how these effects can be brought about. We have seen that if we want to make our

readers feel the loneliness or the beauty of a character's background, we can do so consciously. We have seen that the effect upon the reader in regard to character is achieved by showing the *character in action,* in such a way that a trait of character is in evidence. Sherlock Holmes is a keen observer, we find; but we find it not from a mere statement of the author, but from the discovery that whereas Watson walks up a flight of steps daily without observing them, Sherlock Holmes knows the exact number of steps in the flight. *We see him in action.* We know, to take another example, that Mercutio is a good sport, because, dying, he jokes about his wound. The reader admires both Sherlock Holmes and Mercutio. In one case, the admiration is intellectual; in the other it is emotional and sympathetic. It could have been either. You choose the effect you want, and you make your character act in such a way as to cause that effect.

The same principle that applies to the effect to be achieved by Setting and Character, can also be applied to the Narrative or Plot Crises. Interest and plausibility are essential. If you wish your audience to gasp, you select an incident that will make them gasp. You will not show a man stooping to pick up a string; but rather a man stepping in front of a swiftly moving train, or jumping from the fifteenth story window of a building. This makes the incident interesting, but you will be careful, also, that the incident shall be plausible.

It is apparent, by now, that the more you know about any part of story writing, the more likely you are to be successful with the other parts. You would not have Mercutio act like Sherlock Holmes, nor yet like the Irishwoman, mourning the loss of a child. Your characters, settings, and incidents are inextricably bound together. Sherlock Holmes' talents would not show up profitably in a South Sea Island love story—the incidents would not be suitable. So we come logically to this conclusion:

You select your characters, settings, and narrative turning-points so that they will be to the fullest extent mutually contributary. In this way, you will be most successful in causing

in the reader's mind the effect you wish. In your selection, you will be guided, always, by the requirements of interest and plausibility. Your method of testing your achievement is this: say to yourself, "This story of mine is composed of various scenes, selected, primarily, for story interest. Each scene is intended to contribute to the central, unique narrative interest by forming at its conclusion a major turning-point in the whole plot. In addition, it must cause the illusion of reality. The actors, by their responses, must win or lose the sympathy of the reader as I desire. The setting must create such impression as I determine upon in advance. But, above all, the reader must feel the desired emotional reaction or my work is a failure."

Problem 10

RECOGNITION OF MATERIAL

You will recall, I trust, that in my introductory remarks I spoke about the differences which some writers think of as existing between different sorts of writing. One school says that writing is intended primarily to entertain. The second school says that in addition it must instruct. That is a question of taste. You must decide for yourself with which group you prefer to ally yourself. In considering material, however, this factor need not be kept in mind, except to say that if you wish to instruct you must seek additional material to that which you would seek if you were intending merely to entertain. In general, though, you may safely say that whether you intend to entertain or to instruct you will always have the same material to deal with. It is of primary importance then, that you learn to classify without any possibility of confusion the Stimuli, the Actors, and the Actor's responses.

In this lecture we shall deal exclusively with these. Later we shall take up many other more advanced problems of Short-Story production; all depending upon and having their sources in the fundamental classification of Stimuli, Actors, and Actor's Responses to the Stimuli.

Not only is this combination a fundamental classification, it is also a fundamental and recurring pattern. You make your readers aware that there is a certain stimulus, and an actor in your story becomes aware of that stimulus. You make your readers aware of the actor's appearance. You then show how the actor reacted to the stimulus; that is to say, you show what the actor did, or said, or felt, or thought about the stimulus.

A Stimulus is anything which stimulates a character to thought or feeling or speech or action.

An Actor is a person who takes a part in your story.

A Response of an actor is anything he thinks, says, or does upon becoming aware of the stimulus.

One of the purposes of this lecture is to show you that these stimuli, actors, and responses can easily be classified. There are, in this world, only ten kinds of stimuli. To quote Kipling, "You may take up the wings of the morning and flop round the earth till you're dead," and you will find only these classifications of stimuli.

1. A Complete Setting.

"It was the old familiar room, large and lofty, with a collection of well-fed ladies lying in awkward poses on the florid ceiling. The massive and disconcerting furniture, brown and gold, and red velvet, showed no further signs of wear, and the open jalousies of the three high windows framed the inevitable view. The same two barges with their red and yellow lanterns were lying out upon the water, surrounded by gondolas, and from them both, on, on, regardless of each other, rose those piercing soprano voices to the indefatigable accompaniment of violins and guitars."

From "Remember Lot's Wife." By Cosmo Hamilton, *Sat. Eve. Post,* Nov. 22, 1924.

2. A Partial Setting.

"An oleograph of the coronation of Queen Victoria, which bore the astonishing title, 'Try Hughes's Yeast.' "

"On the table lay a stiff-covered book, with tooled leather binding."

"From the kitchen came the odor of roasting coffee."

(Note.—All complete settings are made up of the total of their sensory impressions, whether the sense to which you appeal is the sense of sight, of smell, of hearing, touch, or taste. Therefore, any object, odor, sound, etc. is a partial setting. Most

writers who are expert craftsmen, realizing this, use as many appeals as possible. The incompetent writer, on the other hand, seems content to rely entirely upon the sense of sight to create his impression. The mark of the wholly incompetent writer is his failure to make any appeal to the emotions through appeals to the senses. Later in the course this requirement will be dealt with in detail.)

3. The Image of An Actor in the Story.

Presently he became aware of "a huge figure, buttoned up in sea-going blue, with a shaggy head of white hair like an albino chrysanthemum over a brick-red face, who seemed to be gesticulating at him with large circular gestures from the head of the yacht's gangplank."

From "The Mayor of Flamingo," Marjory Stoneham Douglas, *S. E. P.*, Apr. 24, 1926.

"The doctor was a big man, but fat; so fat that his eyes were almost hidden in soft folds of flesh; so fat that he could not lean over to use the stethoscope without puffing."

From "Wide as a Barn Door," Lucien Cary, *S. E. P.*, Apr. 24, 1926.

(Note.—In presenting the actors in your story to your audience, it is essential that you keep in mind the distinction between the Image of an actor, and the CHARACTER of that actor. The first is concerned purely with appearance, the second is concerned with the TRAITS or CHARACTERISTICS of the actor.)

4. An Animal.

"Sitting on the chair was a round, fat, white bull-dog, with an underhanging jaw."

5. The existence of a Condition or State of Affairs which makes it necessary for an actor in the story to respond.

(a) "He had invested his savings in a promising speculation whose failure left him penniless."

From "The Clearest Voice," by Margaret Sherwood. The *Atlantic Monthly.*

(b) "And Blake added, 'we've sold every fur and every pound of bone and oil, and we've forty Upisk wives to our credit at fifty dollars apiece.' "

From "Back to God's Country," by James Oliver Curwood.

(Note.—In the first example, the existence of this condition is made known in words of the author. This is the narrative method. In the second, the existence of the condition is made known through the words of an actor in the story. This is the dramatic method. Either method may be used.)

6. An Opinion Expressed by an Actor in the Story.

"A man with as much character as that man has in his eyes is bound to make good."

7. The Speech of an Actor.

"Shake hands, Sir, with the new boy and tell him you're sorry."

"It's lucky you backed down."

"Madam, a lady wants to see you. She says it is urgent The name is Mrs. John Harvey."

"Well, put it that way if you like."

8. The Minor or Subtle Actions of a Character.

"Mr. Brownbee cleared his throat."

"Old Heythorp shook his head."

"Mrs. Harvey leaned forward, her little shabby hands groping for something."

9. The Violent Actions of a Character.

"She flung off his hand."

"He hurled the book across the room."

"He swung a blow at Jimmy's face."
"His right fist sped to his opponent's jaw."

10. THE ACTIONS OF FORCES OF NATURE.

"The stalactite fell from the roof of the cave."
"The sun rose above the East River."

THE ACTORS IN A STORY ARE OF THREE KINDS ONLY.

Human Beings.
Animals.
Forces of Nature.

There is always the possibility of considering the warring forces within the same individual as actors in a story; but this is confusing classification. It will be simpler to think of the clash of such forces as the clash between different reactions to the same stimulus, or even to different stimuli. The Responses of an Actor to Stimuli, can fortunately be placed under a few simple classifications. An Actor responds to a stimulus by

A CHANGE OF EXPRESSION OR APPEARANCE.

Example. He flushed until the blood suffused his whole face.
He turned pale.
He frowned.

A SUBTLE OR MINOR ACT.

Example. He cleared his throat.
He tapped the table with his fingers.
She leaned forward.

A VIOLENT ACTION.

Example. She flung off his hand.
He hurled the book across the room.
He swung a blow at Jimmy's face.
His right fist sped to his opponent's jaw.

By Speech.

Example. "Shake hands, sir, with the new boy and tell him you're sorry."
"It's lucky you backed down."
"Madam, a lady wants to see you. She says it is urgent. The name is Mrs. John Harvey."
"Well, put it that way if you like."

By His Thoughts or Feelings.

Example. "A vexed sense of triumph came to him."
"He knew they were crooks."

In examining some of the examples I have placed before you of the stimuli to which an actor responds, and the examples of the responses of the actors to stimuli you have undoubtedly been struck by the coincidence that whereas the subtle and violent actions, and the speech of an actor have been listed in one category as stimuli, in the other they have been listed as responses. This apparent contradiction is easily explained. If Actor A speaks to Actor B the conversation may run like this:

1. Actor A. "Are you sure you've got the right name."
2. Actor B. "Sure; of course I'm sure. Don't you think I've got any sense?"
3. Actor A. "I could be arrested for what I think of what sense you've got."

The speech of Actor B on lines 2 and 3 "Sure; of course I'm sure, etc." in his response to a stimulus. The stimulus to which he responds is the speech of Actor A on line 1, "Are you sure, etc."

Besides being a response, it is also, however, the stimulus for the response of Actor A on line 4. "I could be arrested, etc."

The dual quality possessed by actions and speech of an actor, of being a stimulus, and at the same time being also a response, is true of the persons in your story. One person may enter a room. He may become aware of another person. The first

person is the actor. The second person is the stimulus to which the first person responds. As soon as this response of the second person causes a response from the first person, it then becomes the stimulus. This may seem somewhat confusing at first; but as you come to a clearer understanding of what is involved in the production of a Short-story you will find that it presents no difficulty. As soon as you master the Problem of the Point of View, the reason for this distinction between the Person as Stimulus and the person as Actor will become evident to you.

By this time, however, one conclusion is inescapable. It is that the modern Short-story is one person's account of the responses of himself or of somebody else to a number of stimuli, these responses being arranged in a pattern of narrative turning points.

Because the Short-story is a form of Art, and because all Art depends for its effect upon a totality of Sensory Impressions, the Stimuli which you select for presentation have a double purpose—

(a) to form sense-appeals, contributing to an *emotional impression* upon the consciousness of your reader, and

(b) to form the cause of the actor's responses which show to the reader the *traits* or *characteristics* of the actor whose responses make up the pattern of your story. Every action of an actor, subtle or violent, every thought and feeling of an actor *is and must be* the response to some stimulus. The mere rendering of a number of stimuli and a number of responses to those stimuli does not constitute a short-story. THERE IS NO STORY UNTIL THERE IS A PLOT OR PATTERN OF CRISES OR TURNING POINTS.

Yet it must be kept in mind, always, that this pattern or plot, in a good short-story, goes side by side with a sense of reality. In the long run, it is PRESENTATION and not PLOTTING that distinguishes the best writers. A plot alone is not sufficient. The sense of convincingness may be lacking. There may not be a sufficient number of Sensory Appeals; these give reality. The illusion of reality may be shocked into unbelief by a response

of an actor which is ambiguous. Sometimes the response of an actor in a story leaves the reader in doubt as to just what trait of character was intended by the author. The fault, here, is in PRESENTATION. Sometimes poor presentation by the writer may mislead the reader as to the real character of the actor, and may make the story uninteresting to him, because he views the actor in a light quite different from that intended by the author. Finally, the presentation, though authentic, may lack vitality, because it is not sufficiently dramatic.

Thus, *artistic* considerations impose upon you the necessity of rendering images and *impressions* of the Stimuli, the Actors, and the Responses. *Narrative* considerations demand that the happenings which cause this impression shall lead into or lead out of *Plot crises or Turning-points.* The reader's *interest* will be more quickly enlisted and held if the happenings are *dramatic.* The reader's *partisanship* will be aroused for and against the actors in your story in proportion as the traits of the actors are clearly differentiated. It will be well, at the outset, to make a clear and definite distinction between the impression of beauty which a reader receives from reading your description of a sunrise or a swaying tree or a ship upon the crest of a wave, and the *emotion* of *anger* which he feels when a hulking brute strikes a weak consumptive.

All of these considerations will enter into the selection and rejection of material. Yet the nucleus of every story is a unit of stimulus and response. In estimating the fitness of the Stimuli and Responses that you may use, you must test them *artistically* to make certain that they will arouse an emotional *impression* in the consciousness of your reader. Then, knowing, as you will know, after a study of this series of lectures and frequent reference to the Case Book, the principles of Narrative Arrangement, you will so arrange the happenings that they lead into Plot turning-points or crises.

Later you will have an opportunity to make a comprehensive study of the qualities of Drama. When you have mastered this, you will have a definite yardstick which will enable you to determine whether or not the Presentation Units of your story

possess the quality of Drama. Then, and then only, you will be able to foretell with reasonable accuracy whether or not the story is one which will win your reader's sympathetic interest.

All of these processes of weighing material are separate and distinct. They must be approached one at a time. Yet, frequently the mastery of one process will bring about the mastery of another. Although they may appear formidable, at first, through practice they will become sub-conscious. Until they do, your writing cannot be successful. Then you will find that all the processes have merged.

Therefore, the more you know, the less conscious you will become. The less conscious you are, the more likely your writing is to appear unstudied and spontaneous. If you understand form, you will not be likely to make a wrong choice of form. In that way a knowledge of form is of inestimable value to you.

The form in which you present your story will be either narrative or dramatic. A piece of writing which is presented in dramatic form is more likely to be dramatic in quality than one which is narrative in form. For that reason alone, the dramatic form is preferable to the narrative form, when you wish to achieve *drama;* when you wish to achieve *impression* the narrative form of presentation is preferable. Remember that the distinguishing outward characteristic of dramatic form is that the words are the words of the actors. That you may be in no doubt as to what I mean, I want you to glance over page 149 of the Case Book. In the story "Sunk," lines 1 to 27 are in narrative form. Lines 28 to 178 are in dramatic form.

An examination of this excerpt from SUNK will disclose to you that the portion of the writing which is *narrative in form* is concerned with sensory impressions of settings, partial settings, and images of actors; whereas the portion of the writing which is dramatic in form is concerned with the oral interchange between the actors. In general the distinction is a sound one. *Impression* and *information* are conveyed in the *narrative* form. Thus authenticity and plausibility are achieved. The

reader is made aware of the dramatic quality of material, most usually, from material conveyed in the *dramatic* form. Thus interest is achieved and *partisan emotion* aroused.

To be able to make the distinction between that material which naturally lends itself to rendering in the *narrative form,* and that material which is most suitably rendered in the *dramatic* form is your first step in becoming a competent craftsman in the writing of the modern Short-story. Because this is the case you will at once be confronted with the necessity for viewing your material in the classifications I have indicated:

Impression of a Stimulus
Impression of an Actor

usually rendered in the *narrative form,* by the author's words

The Response of the Actor

usually rendered most effectively in the dramatic form, in the words of the actor; made authentic by such interpolated words of the actor as he thinks are necessary to preserve the dialogue from baldness, or are needed to preserve an impression already made upon the consciousness of the reader, or to guide the reader's *partisan emotion* in the channels the author intends.

You will be able to regard yourself as a completely competent craftsman in the short-story medium, when you have learned to observe and classify your material not only in this way, but also in a way which will permit you to judge and appraise it in the light of its other requirements. We shall take these up in detail, later. I want to impress upon you now that a story is *written to be read;* it will not be read unless it is good fiction. You must have some criterion by which you can foretell the likelihood of a story being accepted or rejected, *as good fiction.* Only then will you begin to *think* in terms of fiction. People who are learning a foreign language discover that they do not really master a language until they begin to *think* in that language. Such will be your experience as a fiction-writer; it is only when you begin to *think* in terms of fiction that you can be classed as an expert.

The expert practitioner in any profession is the one who has practiced so long and so carefully that he has met every technical problem of his profession. Between the novice and the professional the difference is chiefly in the frame of mind, in the attitude toward his material. The novice is doubtful—he lacks the self-confidence of experience. The expert is sure of himself. This is true of all trades and professions. Nowhere is it more true than in the case of the writer. Problems that seem staggering to a novice cause the established author not even a momentary qualm, because that type of problem he has met so often that he knows automatically a number of possible solutions.

The professional author will tell you that in producing a story there are three phases of his task which come before he begins to write at all. These three phases or processes are:

1. The phase of observation and classifying, during which you observe and classify a sufficient body of material to allow you ample choice. With this is sometimes combined the second phase, recording.

2. The phase of recording is that during which, having observed and classified material, you set it down either in the form of rough notations, to be used at some indefinitely later time, or as a part of a story already projected.

3. The phase of plotting, in which you arrange your happenings with an eye to the occurrences of narrative crises or turning points in the course of the story's unfolding.

Each phase must be thoroughly mastered until the processes become submerged in the subconsciousness, so that you will be able to devote yourself wholeheartedly to the two phases of producing a story which are really artistic: the actual writing of the first draft, and the revision for clarity and felicity of expression. Only then can you really feel that you are reacting to life in terms of fiction; only then can you feel that you *think* in terms of fiction.

People who would like to write and who do not write give two reasons for their failure. The first is "I have nothing to

write about"; the second is "I have a great many ideas, but I can't put them into plots."

While many people are willing to admit their lack of material and their inability to plot, very few people ever will admit that they cannot write well. They seem, somehow, to have the idea that writing is a small part of producing a finished story. Yet strangely enough, stories which are rejected by the editors are usually rejected not because of lack of originality in the material, or because of failure to arrange that material properly, so much as because of lacks in the presentation or writing—in the way the story is told. Frequently these lacks would disappear through careful pruning and revision. In respect to faultless writing it was Fox who first said "Easy writing makes damned hard reading." If the author is content with the first rough draft he is too easily satisfied. Facility and charm of style come from much and constant revision. *The way to learn to write is to rewrite.* To learn to gather material is easy. For the person who admits faults in rhetoric or awkwardness of style, there is hope; the person who cannot plot can be taught; but the person who is not willing to revise is almost inevitably doomed. Rigidity of mind is fatal to accomplishment in fiction, because it indicates usually, little imagination.

The professional knows this. He changes his material, he changes the order of its arrangement; and he polishes phrases, recasts sentences, and frequently rewrites whole paragraphs and pages before he is satisfied. The amateur, on the other hand, is usually so anxious to rush into print, so proud of his product, and so jealous of any criticism that he will send to an editor a story so manifestly unfit, and so evidently unsuited, that the manuscript simply screams "amateur!" The chief reason for this is that the amateur *has not at his command a sufficiency of material.* He has no reserve to draw upon. He cannot make changes because he has nothing to substitute.

The writer who is so lacking in ammunition is bound to fight a losing battle, because here, as elsewhere, "God is on the side that has the heaviest artillery." But to say that you are lacking in material is a confession of weakness, an instant admission of

incapacity. Whenever I hear anyone say, "I have nothing to write about" I am reminded of the remark of Blucher, the German War hero. He visited London, where he was given a great reception which included being driven through the streets in a splendid coach. When the young Englishmen asked him what he thought of London they expected him to say something pleasant and polite; but the bluff old German said simply, "What a city to loot."

If you want material for stories, today, you have only to look about you; once your eyes are opened you will exclaim with Blucher "What a place to loot." The whole world is material for fiction, because fiction is merely an attempt to give an illusion of life. The difference between art and life, however, is that life is chaotic; causes and results are not always easily traceable; but chiefly the difference between life and art in any medium is that the artist selects and arranges his material before presenting it to his audience. His higher purpose, of course, is to catch and hold fleeting and elusive glimpses of beauty. As a writer you are an artist. But you are likewise a craftsman and a technician. As an artist you are perceptive of people and places; but as a fiction writer you are interested besides, in what is happening to those people and at those places, these happenings giving to the people and the places an additional fiction interest. You are first aware of the emotional appeal of your material, apart from its arrangement. The narrative requirement of your medium demands that you classify your material in respect to its availability and its arrangement into a pattern or plot. Your knowledge of the Laws of Interest, which you will learn about later on in the course, will enable you to appraise the dramatic quality of your material.

You will soon learn that gathering material is child's play. You have only to remember that a story is just *one person's account of things that happened, either to himself or to someone else.* The things, mark you, don't have to happen to *you;* if you know about them, that is all that is necessary. You may have *seen them;* somebody may have *told you about them;* or you may even have *read about them.* You must see life in

terms of forces in action, and you must learn to render the results of your observation in those terms. To the fiction writer life is not static; it is made up of happenings. But it is primarily composed of Stimuli, Actors and Actors' Responses. You must learn to observe in those terms.

Observation comes first. At the root of all successful writing is the law that without observation there can be no successful creation over any sustained period. Most aspiring writers do not know how to observe. Most practiced writers do. Yet, novices and experts all go through the same phases. They observe material, select some for their uses, then present it to their audiences. Some fortunate writers record their impressions subconsciously upon the tablets of their memories; but most people are not so fortunately endowed; their memories are sieves. That is why the wise writer depends upon recorded observations, and makes notations. He knows that observation is of the greatest value when its result is recorded while the impression is fresh and undisturbed. Even though this immediate recording may consist of mere fragmentary notations of impressions, it is valuable for two reasons. First, it teaches exactness of observation, which requires concentrated attention. Professor Charles Townsend Copeland, I remember, in that justly famous Harvard Course called "English Twelve," phrased it with his characteristically concise clarity; "Attention is the mother of memory." Again, concentrated attention fixes its object in the memory of the observer.

The notations themselves become material. Consulted after the original impression has become dulled and clouded, they spur the imagination, helping the writer to visualize clearly many details of the setting or of the appearance of an actor, or a characteristic distinguishing gesture which has entirely passed from the writer's conscious memory, and which would have been lost to him forever if the notations had not served to freshen his memory. Yet these notations have a more important service to perform in helping the writer, in that the sensations which they serve to recreate, form, in their totality an impression which causes an emotional reaction. Without the

original fragmentary notations this emotional effect could not have been reproduced with fidelity.

In their scope, of course, these notations include not only impressions of stimuli, actors, and responses, but also plot outlines, general and specific information, and everything and anything which can be used in the creation and production of a short-story.

Observation, the first phase of the writer's task, merges readily and almost imperceptibly into the second. Observation is followed so quickly by the classification of that material that the two processes often seem to the inexpert bystander to be one. Yet, they are distinct. It is not sufficient that the writer learn merely *how* to observe, he must know *what* to observe. In order that he may be able to select, he must have at his disposal a vast store of material from which to choose. That material which is finally selected must be interesting in itself or be so combined with other material as to acquire interest. It is trained imagination and maturity of judgment which enable a writer to recognize this possibility of combining happenings in themselves uninteresting so that they become in association interesting. Interest is a prime requirement.

That is why maturity of judgment is necessary. The immature person has not developed his standards sufficiently. He chooses unwisely. The greatest gift the gods can bestow upon a writer is electicism, the ability to pick and choose delicately, the capacity for selecting without hesitation from the tangled skein of life the thread of pure interest. With this power, everything observed becomes material for fiction, since everything observed is a stimulus to the imagination.

Only after the imagination has had play upon material can the classification of that material be really effective. The fiction-writer must observe life differently from, say a policeman, a physician, or a track-walker. He should be observing with the idea of classifying, and this will lead him to be aware not of people but actors; not streets, or countrysides, or rooms, or churches, chairs, bundles, odors, sounds, surfaces, textures, etc., but Stimuli; not merely happenings, but happenings as they

either proceed from or lead into turning points or narrative crises. With these classifications understood, observation is no longer haphazard but directed. Then only can the writer arrange his happenings to the best advantage. When they are arranged he has what is generally called a plot. A great deal of mystery would be removed from short-story craftsmanship if people would realize that a story is simply one person's arranged account of happenings of which either he or someone else was the center.

But the bare observation and classifying of happenings does not mark the fiction-writer as in any way distinct from, say the detective, or the railroad brakeman, or the traveling salesman. The essential quality of the fiction writer is that he wants to record what he has seen. But in putting that desire into effect the amateur falters. It is easier to procrastinate. There is no denying that getting the results of observation upon paper is hard work—hard on the imaginative and mental muscles. But just as the fact that exercises which prove hard on the muscles of the body show that those muscles need strengthening, in this case the only conclusion can be that where the mental muscles resent the task, they, too, need strengthening, by exercise.

Mental muscles, fortunately, like physical muscles, become facile with practice. For it is a fact that I cannot too strongly emphasize, that the imagination can be developed. Like everything else in nature, it grows by what it feeds upon, and it develops through exercise. No exercise I know of is better for developing the imagination than this one of recording and classifying the results of observation. Not always easy at first, this recording of classified material becomes less and less difficult every time the writer practices it. The task he does fifty times he can do with infinitely fewer motions the fiftieth time than the first. What appears to be appallingly difficult in prospect becomes after practice, astonishingly easy. And, as he progresses, the learner will find himself reacting more and more easily, more and more eagerly, until at last the process is subconscious; and his reactions are those of a

professional fiction-writer. He will learn to make a clear distinction between Plotting and Presentation.

The mark of the professional is that he sees his material in the light of two uses: as it can be made to contribute to the plot, and as it can be made to contribute to the effect. Plotting is largely a technical problem, while Presentation is almost entirely an artistic one. Under plotting there are, of course, some artistic problems such as determining the choice of narrator, the point of view, and the proportion of space to different characters; but the chief problems in plotting are in the arrangement of the happenings already observed and classified.

The capacity for observation can be developed so that you may have a great storehouse of such happenings upon which to draw, and therefore will not be forced to accept everything that comes your way. From your wealth you will be in a position to select only the very finest and most suitable gifts to charm your audience.

One month of well directed observation will teach you that gathering material is child's play. Thereafter your problem becomes one of selection and rejection on the basis of interest and plausibility and of arrangement in such a way as to form a narrative pattern or plot. It is important to remember in regard to the happenings you observe, that things do not have to happen to you yourself; if you know about them that is all that is necessary. The experience need not be personal: in the case of most writers it is not. Fiction like all literature, is the translation of experience, either real or vicarious, in terms of art. The happenings you write about you must *know* about. That is all that is necessary. You may have seen them, somebody may have told you about them, or you may have read about them. But whether you have read about them, heard about them, or been yourself aware of them, they will be available to you only in proportion as you are a trained observer. As an observer of stimuli, of actors who respond to those stimuli, and of the responses of those actors to those stimuli, you as a writer differ from the ordinary run of human beings who are for the most part very superficial observers. People

are aware of things in two ways, consciously and sub-consciously. Some psychologists go so far as to say that no experience is ever wholly lost from our subconsciousness. They say that our perceptions even when apparently new are in reality, nine parts memory. When an ordinary person receives an impression, it is usually a jumbled and indistinct one. When you as an author seek to recreate that impression you do so by sharpening the detail so that the reader lives again the experience, or one similar to it. You call to his attention salient details of which he was previously aware only subconsciously. He thinks of them often as new perceptions, whereas what you have done is to refresh his memory.

By this time a certain pattern of the Short-story writer's development must be clear to you. Observation is fundamental. Part of your equipment as a writer is an intellectual curiosity in regard to the world in general and to your material in particular. Only through observation can you satisfy this curiosity. Only through observation can you achieve verisimilitude or the appearance of reality. This necessity for verisimilitude will face you in every piece of writing you do. You are always checking up on your detail, upon the reality of what you are rendering. It will become obvious to you that this appearance of reality will depend upon the accuracy of your recording. It is safe to say that your invention will be used in plotting or arranging your happenings into a pattern of crises or turning points. Your imagination, which is your ability to create images, will be employed in filling in the details of your impression of reality: the details of the Stimuli, the Actors, and the Actor's Responses. Reduced to its lowest elements the pattern of a story, repeated again and again is like this:

Stimulus
Actor's Response
Stimulus
Actor's Response

Stimulus
Actor's Response
Stimulus
Actor's Response

These Stimuli and these Responses must, to be effective emotionally, be rendered wherever possible in terms of Sensory Impressions. Because the Actor must make some impression upon the consciousness of the reader, the reader must also be given some image of that actor as a person. Besides this, the actor may also be a Stimulus to another actor's Response; so that the necessity for keeping his image before the reader is doubly apparent.

You will remember that I mentioned, in the early part of this Lecture, the narrative and the dramatic form of presenting your material. Keep in mind that the form in which you present your material is only the outward indication of the quality of that material. It has nothing to do with the quality of the material. Strictly speaking there are very few examples of pure narration and of pure dramatic presentation, in short-stories. Narration is the author's orderly recital of happenings; but seldom does such a recital go far without including some appeal to the senses. As soon as writing includes any appeal whatsoever to the senses, it becomes Descriptive Writing. The Modern Short-Story, therefore, is rendered usually in Descriptive Narrative Writing. Going back over what I have told you, you will see that your material of Stimuli, Actors, and Actor's Responses can be rendered in Descriptive Narrative with a few exceptions.

The Existence of a Condition or State of Affairs which makes it necessary for an actor to respond may be summed up in a statement by the author or in a statement by an actor. An Opinion expressed by an actor in the story is also a statement. Whenever an author proceeds to analyze an actor's thoughts or feelings, he is making a statement. Statements are of two kinds: those made by actors, and those made by the author. Statements, because they appeal to the understanding of the

reader rather than to his emotion, as do Sensory Impressions, are less likely to be effective. For this reason they are likely to be dull. The statements made by actors are less likely to be dull than those made by the author. Usually they are short; but besides this, they are likely to be helped out by the addition of images, and in that way serve as appeals to the emotions. Also, through characterizing the actor by differentiating him from other actors they are likely to be more effective than statements made by the author, designed purely to appeal to the understanding. In the next Lecture we shall go more completely into Descriptive Writing, and in the Lecture on Style we have already treated of it. Just now it will suffice to say that the author's statement, unenlivened by the addition of Sensory Impression is dull, and that Sensory Impressions are stimulating to the reader.

Yet it is essential to remember that the chief purpose of every story is to show the Responses of an actor to Stimuli, and that another actor may be that Stimulus, the mutual responses bringing about an interchange which is in form, at least, dramatic.

In reading over the first 18 lines of "Sunk," (Case No. 6) you will observe that the Descriptive Narrative deals with Time, Place, and the appearance of the actor. They are the equivalent of the stage setting of the play-wright. Therefore, in dealing with Time, Place and Appearance of Actors you will use Descriptive Narrative. Whenever two actors are brought together you will render the interchange between them in the Dramatic Form. When you come to the rendering of this interchange you will see that the pattern varies only slightly from the pattern used by the dramatist. But slight as that variation is it is the distinguishing mark which differentiates the two techniques.

If a dramatist was rendering for stage production the scene from "Sunk" in which Jason Terwilliger is attempting to persuade his uncle to give him two thousand dollars, (lines 20 to 69) he would have rendered it thus:

UNCLE

"I told you never to enter this house again."

NEPHEW

"I wouldn't be here if it wasn't necessary. I've got to have two thousand dollars."

UNCLE

"Jason, I've given you thousands of dollars, and I'm not going to give you any more. You aren't worth it. I've spent my life making the name Terwilliger stand for industry and decency and you've spent yours making it stand for every kind of dissipation. I won't be blackmailed any longer. When I was your age——"

NEPHEW

"You were pearl poaching in the South Seas."

UNCLE

"That's a lie! Every dollar I took out of the South Seas was an honest dollar. I worked hard for it. I didn't lean on anyone. At your age I was a man. And you—you've leaned on me ever since you were expelled from college. But you aren't going to lean on me any more."

NEPHEW

"You've got to help me. If I can't get my hands on two thousand dollars by tomorrow noon—"

UNCLE

"You won't get it from me. God, but you've sunk low. Do you realize you've utterly ruined your life and you're not yet twenty-five? You haven't drawn a sober breath in the past four years."

This pattern becomes

Stimulus.	Uncle's speech
Response.	Nephew's speech
Stimulus.	Uncle's speech
Response.	Nephew's speech

But as rendered by Mr. Worts, in terms of short-story craftsmanship, there are certain additions, thus:

Line	28	said his uncle harshly.
"	31	the young man nodded sullenly.
"	47	his nephew snorted.
"	58	his nephew said desperately.
"	64	the old man snarled.

These deal not with stimulus and response, but with the actor, and they make the change in the pattern thus:

Stimulus Combined	Uncle (an actor) as stimulus Uncle's speech as stimulus
Actor's Image	A sullen young man
Response	Speech of actor.

Two things you are expected to learn from this Lecture. The first is to recognize the elementary classifications of the material, you are to work with as

(a) stimuli
(b) actors
(c) actors' responses.

The second is to realize that it will be well for you to begin *at once* making classifications under these headings from memory, from information received, but preferably from your personal observation.

Problem 11

THE TAKING OF NOTES

It must by now be quite apparent that as a writer learns to think in terms of fiction he becomes more efficient and more facile in adapting to his use everything which he observes. A logical development of such a condition is that a writer must necessarily have at his disposal a great deal more material than he can possibly utilize immediately. There is always facing him the danger of overlooking possibilities which he might later be able to use, because he is too much occupied with the project immediately demanding his attention. This is one of the reasons that makes the taking of notes advisable. A second reason for taking notes is that such recording automatically forces the writer to observe more closely and accurately than he might ordinarily observe, so that the material becomes more easily fixed in his memory. The third reason, and perhaps the most important reason for taking notes, is that those notes, consulted later, act as a sort of spark which sets the creative machinery in motion. Perhaps it would be better to say the imaginative machinery. Those notes bring up images for the writer. From those images he is able to reconstruct other images suggested by them.

Any suggestions to writers for a system of taking notes must be approached with trepidation. Here, almost more than anywhere else in the world of writing, one man's meat is very often another man's poison. What may be a very desirable system for one person may be a very tantalizing and very unsuccessful system for another. The best system is the system that works best for you, to which your individuality can be most easily adapted. Above all, writers should avoid friction of any kind; that is, friction which is likely to

slow up their own creative machinery. In adopting a system for the filing of your material and its utilization it is essential that you keep in mind your own temperament. It must be a system which will fit in with and assist your processes of utilizing material. It must, in short, be a workable system. To be workable it must be simple. To be simple it must be a system which can be neglected from time to time if you so desire. Preferably it should be one which is not too bulky. The system that I use is, in my opinion, simplicity itself. It keeps in mind the two general functions of the writer which precede the actual writing of his story; those two being the gathering of material and its classifying, and arrangement into a pattern or plot. If you wish, you may regard this period of the writer's production as having three phases: the gathering of material, its classification, and its arrangement. This is, of course, highly unimportant.

The first phase, which is the gathering of material for general classification, is to the writer what skipping the rope, shadow-boxing and road-work are to the pugilist. They keep him in training and prevent his becoming stale. There are, of course, times in the life of the writer, as in the life of the pugilist, when he does become stale, and the best thing for him to do is to rest. But, unlike a pugilist, he may be resting and suddenly discover that his interest has returned. Again unlike the pugilist, it is not necessary that he return to his training base in order to resume training. He can do so, under this system which I use, immediately and in any place where he happens to be.

The whole system is based upon a plentiful supply of the ordinary three by five filing cards, upon which notations can be made very readily. A man can carry as many as fifty of these little cards about with him in his vest pocket, or coat pocket, without their being noticeable or bothersome. A woman can carry them in her little hand-satchel. In making notes, I prefer a fountain pen to a pencil, because these notations do not become so readily blurred when made with a pen as when made with a pencil. There are occasions, however,

when a pencil is the only available implement. I keep in my study the ordinary grey filing boxes, which can be purchased at any stationery store for seventy-five cents, which are made to hold these three by five cards and their little pink or vari-colored guides. The whole outfit does not cost more than a couple of dollars, at most. The guides are the most important part, because upon the classification made upon these guides depends the success of the whole system. The classifications which I find most useful are as follows:

1. Titles
2. Settings
3. Character Impressions
4. Character Traits
5. Types
6. Professions
7. Real People
8. Situations of Accomplishment
9. " " Decision
10. Interchanges (Episodes, Encounters, Scenes).
11. Conclusive Acts
12. Short-Story Possibilities
13. Play Possibilities
14. Poem Possibilities
15. Novel Possibilities
16. Articles Projected
17. Plot Outlines
18. General Information.

The great value of this system is the ease with which it works. Even though you may forget to take with you a supply of the little cards, you can always find the back of an envelope or a piece of paper that will do instead. The virtue of having the little cards is that you can transfer them without re-transcribing, immediately into the box behind their own proper classification, and then, if you wish, you can forget about them indefinitely. The advantage of the little guides is that the classifications which they represent are very easy to remem-

ber. Even though you do not remember them, you can always make a new classification when you feel like doing so, even though it means re-transcribing some of your notations under different headings. By making the notations upon these small three by five cards you almost insure yourself against having to do this sort of thing, because the smallness of the space is likely to determine for you a single classification; that is to say, that under Character you will not be likely to include anything not within the scope of character.

In an earlier Lecture I pointed out to you that the difference between the fiction writer and the writer of non-fiction is that although they deal with the same material, the fiction writer's ultimate purpose is to include that material in a pattern or plot. With this ultimate end always before you, you will of necessity keep in mind that your material is unplotted material and plotted material, and that either class of material may be amplified at any time by additional notations. In one case you will be merely adding to your store of possible material, in the other case you will be whipping material which you have already outlined into better shape.

You will remember that I have insisted throughout this series of problems that *everything* is material for fiction, provided you *think* in terms of fiction. It remains non-fiction material, however, just so long as it is unplotted. The borderline between non-fiction and fiction material is a very thin line, and one very easily passed over. More and more as you train yourself to react in terms of fiction, you find yourself without any effort turning non-fiction into fiction material by including it in some sort of pattern or plot. You may, for example, begin by observing a character in order to isolate the traits or characteristics, and end by outlining a complete story growing out of such characteristics. On the other hand, you may begin with a situation; that is, the necessity for accomplishment; or you may begin with a situation of decision; that is, the necessity for decision, and from it project a character whose traits would equip him or her to solve the problem raised by the situation. It may be that you know some real

person, and you may invent a situation to fit that real person. It may be that you have heard an anecdote, and the anecdote itself, while it is not sufficient for a complete story, may furnish a single scene in the body of that story, or in the ending of that story, so that you have the nucleus of a plot which you proceed to elaborate. But, whatever you do, you must first of all realize that material exists before you begin to make it into a pattern or plot.

One of the very desirable features of the system of note taking about which I am now telling you is that it lends itself so readily to amplification. It might be well, however, for me to illustrate to you just how it works in its first function of gathering and classifying the material which is available for you upon all hands as soon as you know how to observe properly. I shall take up the notations classification by classification as I have pointed them out to you: First comes the classification of Title. Many stories have grown out of Titles. Under the classification Titles in my filing system I find, for example, the title "That Check of Thompson's."

This title is a perfect example of a notation made upon the spur of the moment when I had no intention of observing material consciously. At the time I was in an office waiting for some clerk to look up some detail for me. As he bent over his files, a second clerk came along, and seeing him, yelled across the room, "Bill, what about that check of Thompson's?" It seemed to me at the time that there might be somewhere a story built about a check, either a check drawn by a man named Thompson or a check drawn to the order of a man named Thompson. The title seems to me to have all the qualifications of interest. It intrigues the curiosity without giving away too much of the story. As a matter of fact, as far as I am concerned there is at present no story. I have not tried to develop the title into a situation or an idea. Were I to do so, I might, for example, say that a check of Thompson's had been found which caused the identification of a man who had murdered Thompson. It might be that the check of Thompson's was drawn to the order of a man whom he

hoped to bribe by the check. It might be that the check of Thompson's was a check which furnished proof that Thompson had accepted a bribe. It might be proof that another man had accepted a bribe. There are, in this title, as you can readily see, any number of possibilities for development. I merely offer it as an example of the sort of notation which would be made under the classification of Title.

I find another notation under Title which says Title for volume of College Short Stories, "Special Students." This is a notation made many years ago, when I had in mind writing a number of short stories about Harvard College. There is a classification of students called Special Students. These are people who have entered ordinarily at a more mature age than the other students. They do not belong to any class of freshmen, sophomores, juniors or seniors. They may be equipped educationally as well as any one of these groups. They are registered as special students because they have entered without examination, and often for only a short period of time. Among them are included, usually, extremely interesting and unusual men or women. The idea in mind was to write a story about an individual; to follow it with a story about another individual, and from perhaps fifteen or twenty of those stories all tied together by the central unity of the actors forming a group of special students to complete a volume to be called Special Students.

I find also a title "Reserved for Women Students." This is a notation made some years ago when I first went, after having been a Harvard student, to teach at the University of California. From a college designed entirely to take care of the educational needs of men, I suddenly found myself plunged into a world in which women were much more a deciding factor. Instead of the ordinary restaurants and tobacconists' shops and men's clothing stores of Harvard Square, in Cambridge, I found the approach to the gateway to the University of California lined with beauty shops, the campus covered with women, and signs up on many of the rooms, "Reserved for Women Students."

These notations are sufficient to indicate just the kind of notations which you are likely to make on a three by five card, which you can tuck away at any time under its classification of Titles.

In the lecture on material I mentioned the sort of notation which you would eventually get into the habit of making. There is nothing so important, in my opinion, as learning to observe carefully. The opportunities for observation are on every hand, particularly in regard to the background or setting which you may use at any time in a story. Ten or fifteen minutes is sufficient to enable you to record a very definite impression, which will serve to recreate for you at any future time the whole background of the time and place. There is an added advantage too, because frequently there come periods of waiting which would normally be boresome, which can be utilized in this way without any loss of time whatsoever. Railroad journeys may be enlivened, particularly long journeys, for the scenery changes from state to state. Even if you never wrote a short-story in your life you would gain a good deal of pleasure from making notations during those times when you are unexpectedly required to wait ten or fifteen minutes before somebody has concluded the appointment preceding yours.

I find under my notations of Setting a great many notations made in this way: on the backs of envelopes, on the regular three by five cards, and one or two even on the backs of blank checks. When something struck my fancy and I found myself without an envelope or a piece of paper, I always was able to write upon the back of one of my checks. I find, for example, just such a notation made in this fashion: "March 17, 1927, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer offices, Loew's State Theatre, on Broadway, ten a.m. Get off at sixth floor from elevator. A long corridor. On one side there are green filing cabinets, a desk where a girl sits, and beyond there the door to a filing room. Across the corridor there is a visitors' seat and a seat where the messenger boys wait. Girl at desk writes visitor's name on card and sends in to man wanted. Boy sits

chatting, chewing gum, reading 'Adventures of a Devil Dog, or Tell it to the Marines.' The visitors are usually well-dressed Jewish gentlemen with hard hats and canes and blue overcoats. Some of them wear spats. Boys receive orders from the girl, who is red-headed, rouged, undernourished, about eighteen or nineteen. She is a seneschal guarding the entrance. She gossips with friends. A woman with a manuscript and a letter hurries out of the door and beckons to a boy. Under the artificial light the blue screen looks bluer. Mahogany desk, two telephones, an inkwell, waterglass, notebook, a vase of pussywillows. The girl speaks: 'But I didn't know him; not 'till that morning in court.' The sound of the clickety-click of typewriters, the murmur of the office boys, subdued conversation, the sliding of elevator doors."

This is a typical notation, interrupted at this point by having to go in to see the man upon whom I was calling. I find again another similar notation: "May 26, 1926, twelve o'clock, the Cambridge Trust Company, Cambridge, Mass. The foyer is marble floored, there are turntable doors, a row of grills; on the right there are savings bank tellers' and note tellers' windows, and a little partitioned space, breast high, for the vice president in one corner, where the corner of the vault abuts. There is a counter with blank forms for customers. In the rear the vaults form an elaborate system. Below there are safe deposit boxes. Still further in the rear, near the windows of an alley, is the president's desk. At smaller desks clerks industriously compare figures and make ticks against amounts in the ledgers."

This again, I remember, was interrupted by my having to go in to see the man for whom I was waiting.

Such a notation as this notation made in regard to the Cambridge Trust Company would be an extremely useful one in case a writer proposed to write the story of a bank robbery and wished to lay his scene accurately. Under Characterization I find a notation like this: "In college short-stories one ought to include the desk leaner—the type girl who gets a grade raised by judicious leaning over the desks of the pro-

fessors in the co-educational college flattering them. She has no interest in her studies; she merely wishes to have high grades in order that she may have freedom for the activities of 'the social life' of the college."

I find also "The Broadway Bluff." "The Broadway Bluff is a person, who usually wears a derby hat far on the back of his head, a long, flapping blue overcoat, carries a cane, wears spats, and is always about to put over a big deal, for never less than $50,000. Having told you just how the deal is upon the verge of completion, he proceeds to borrow five dollars, explaining that all the great producers of plays have been in just this dilemma and that the people who have loaned them five dollars at the crucial moment have afterwards been allowed a 'slice' of a play that first went begging and then made four million dollars for the producer. He can tell you the box office receipts of every play; he knows the 'low down' or 'dirt' as to just what is going on behind the scenes. All the big men on Broadway consult him, and usually act upon his advice."

Under Character Image I find such a notation as this: "Mrs. L. 83 years old; wealthy; widow of a prosperous doctor. Large face, blotchy skin, otherwise colorless, like parchment; dresses in black silk; lives in Boston; reads Boston Blue Book; knows everybody's pedigree. If you speak about the Joneses she says 'are they the Boston Joneses or the New York Joneses.' Loves material success; judges people by their evidence of prosperity; judges automobile by its looks, not by its performance. Plays whist; jeweled hands with parchment skin; sulks when she loses."

I find again, "W. A. S.—Forty, tall, well built, clear-eyed, smooth, talkative, Teutonic accent. Appears first selling shrubs, planting them with inordinate care, recovering them at night and selling them again the next day to somebody at a distance. Formerly had been a tradesman in Jersey. Settled on a farm in small New Hampshire township."

Again: "J. P.—About forty: half Indian, half French-Canadian, a typical woodsman who had formerly been a cook

on a sailing vessel. Is rather hard-bitten of feature, very strong and tireless, still has the roll of a sailor in his walk; carries a bag of meal on his back through the snow for five miles in order that his chickens may not go hungry. Uses no plurals, always says 'my cow, my hen,' or 'how many cow you got?' 'How many hen you got?' When asked what would you do with a million dollars, replies 'Wit a million dollars buy a damn big farm out West, by gar!' "

"R. B.—Appears first on the farm of W. A. S. as a tramp. About forty years of age, very well built, is sunburnt, of the tradesman type. Is quite evidently a fugitive, has a furtive, pursued look, and is very silent. After a year of working, sends for his boy, who is about ten years old, with whom he lives in a hut in the woods. Is silent and efficient. Expends all his emotion upon the boy. His attitude is that the whole world is against him and the boy, and that he must protect the boy from the world."

In these notations you will see that character images and character traits very swiftly merge one into the other. Under the classification of Character Traits, however, I find such notations as "Loyalty. Newspaper clipping in *Boston Post* tells of man who had been a store keeper in a large warehouse for thirty years and who was offered promotion to the office force, but who refused because he did not wish to leave the boys who had treated him so well in the storeroom."

Under Honesty I find "Theatrical producer, Earl Carroll. Leon Gordon, the author of 'White Cargo,' came to him and said the man who had agreed to furnish ten thousand dollars to produce it had been taken ill after investing four thousand, and if Carroll were willing to become the producer, Gordon said he could have an 85 per cent interest. Telling of it, Earl Carroll says 'W. Herbert Adams, representing the financial interests, also urged me to produce the show, so I agreed. I dug up the properties from the cellar of the Greenwich Village Theatre, and used my credit to rent the right costumes. It opened up at the Greenwich Village and was a tremendous success. Eventually it moved uptown to Daly's and there were

nine companies producing it. My actual investment had been sixty-eight dollars. I felt that my share in it was too high, and refused to accept more than sixty-five per cent, which in itself is enough to make a fortune.' "

Under Modesty I find "Lindbergh, having made the first non-stop flight across the Atlantic from New York to Paris, on landing and being taken away by the French aviators, wanted to go back to his plane to get some letters of introduction."

Under Situations of Accomplishment I find this notation: "A detective has to discover the identity of a murdered man from cryptic notations in his note book. These notations are obviously not the kind of notations which would be made by an ordinary person."

Under Situations of Decision I find: "A has to decide between accepting a bribe to overlook rascality and seeing his whole carefully built up social structure fall to the ground."

Under Interchanges I find: "Incident—Re freshman from the West, who started down the escalator to the subway and persisted, despite the argument of the guard who tried to dissuade him."

I find under Incidents "The girl who wired the president of the University of California, telling him the train she would arrive on for the summer session, where some ten thousand students are annually enrolled." Also, "In the middle of a lecture the scaffold comes down outside the building, painters appear and begin scraping just as the brilliant instructor is about to make his most telling points."

Under Scenes I find "J. W. and the British Consul.—J. W. 'Have you an automobile?' British Consul, 'I beg your pardon.' J. W. 'Does the street car pass your door?' B. C. 'Yes.' J. W. 'Oh, it does. All right then, take it some time between nine and five and come down to this place where I am working if you want to see me.' " (This was the conversation between a Britisher resident in Boston and the British Consul apropos of his registering for service in the British Army during the war.) Under Scenes I find "Encounter be-

tween Jewish taxi-driver, a Negro washerwoman, who had discovered that the moment she entered the taxi the taxi meter registered fifteen cents before a wheel had turned. An Irish Policeman was called in to settle the controversy."

Under Conclusive Acts I find: "A woman on learning that her husband has died, although she had not seen him for ten years, gives up the money which she had saved for an operation upon her eyes to pay for his burial expenses." I find also, "A woman, on being told that her husband had committed suicide, replied 'What difference does it make to me, I haven't seen him for ten years.' "

This is not the time to discuss the utilization of these notations, because I shall do that later, when I take up the question of building up a story from the material in your files, or the material at hand. Just now I am confining myself to the question of how to gather and arrange the material.

Under the heading Short-Story Possibilities I find, "Governor of Virginia offered reward for 'apprehending and killing pirates' and placed a liberal price on the head of Blackbeard. Lieutenant Maynard and his men captured Blackbeard, took the head of Blackbeard to Bathtown 'hanging at bowsprit's end.' Read Fiske, page 88." I find also "Regarding Jim Butler, engineer on train, who sends message in Morse code to his sweetheart." I find also, "In 1564 the Merchant Adventurers of England lost membership on marriage with a foreign wife." Story Idea for a code story in the dictionary of Pasigraphy (see page 610 Harper's "Book of Facts"). "By Anton Bachmaier, 1868–71—4,334 mental conceptions may be thus communicated."

I find also, "Read *Literary Digest* for March 18, 1922, for details of the methods by which forest rangers track fire culprits through the tracks of horses and automobiles."

I find under Novel Possibilities: "There is an excellent opportunity for a novel on the White-collar complex in America. Men reared to avoid manual labor as beneath their dignity, continue working at white-collar jobs, falling into the hands of the workers on one hand and of the capitalists on the other.

They are ground between upper and nether millstones; they cannot pass on their living costs as the workers can, nor have they any surplus money working for them, as the capitalists have. The white-collar men drag themselves and their families into debt and trouble; they are forced to live, by their white-collar complex, in certain parts of town, and to keep up a certain appearance."

I find under Poem Possibilities this notation: "There is material for a poem in the Geologist's theory that the region of the Caribbean Sea was formerly a land area, and that islands of West Indies are mountain tops of an old civilization. (Read Fiske's 'West Indies' for details.)"

I find a first line of a poem thus: "Why did the Duke and the Lady each?" This was actually a line left upon the blackboard in a classroom from a previous class, but it seemed to me to have rhythm, and a certain charm. The Play Ideas which I find do not seem to me to be worth mentioning, because I have no special interest in that field at the moment.

Under Plot Outlines I find the first notation is this: "A man in college wagers that he will be fired out—that is, that he will bring about his own dismissal. The body of the story is made up of the attempts which he makes and of the various ironic happenings which cause misfire. Finally, he has a change of heart, only to discover that he has been fired." (Curiously enough this very same idea must have appealed to another writer, because I saw in the *Saturday Evening Post* a story, and a very good story it was, too, about a man who, finding that he missed his girl too much, decided to have himself fired. In the end he has a change of heart, because he finds that the girl is about to come East to be near the campus. In this respect the story varies from my concept.)

Under General Information, everything which may be useful to you will be noted. For example, I find a notation made many years ago to the effect that "No fatal minimum exists for dry protoplasm." I find also "For temperature to kill animals from heat or cold; See C. B. Davenport Experimental Morphology, Chapter 8, page 219, Protozoans respond to move-

ment just as the Stock Market does to a leak from the White House." I find also "A fox, by putting his nose under a hedgehog can turn it over. The fox first circles about the hedgehog; having turned it over it slits the hedgehog's throat, and later its belly, and has a lunch." Also, "Snow drifted on ice, after it has been blown by the wind, has the effect of mercerized silk, as seen from the swiftly moving train window." I find also, "the peacock received its eye in the tail from Juno, who took the eye from Argus when Mercury lulled him to sleep, and killed him when he was watching Melos. This is the origin of the death sentence for sleeping on post."

These three by five cards will not serve all purposes, but they will serve a majority of purposes. The daily newspapers are excellent sources of material. You will often find there complete scenes ready to utilize just as they are. You will find in addition, particularly in the Sunday Supplement and in the Magazine Section, articles which give you specialized information, such as, for example, articles on tent slang in the circus, which you may sometimes want to use for a story written about a circus. You may find, for example, a map of a certain district in Alaska. You may find an article about the habits and customs of the Eskimos. These, quite clearly, cannot be put upon a three by five card; but they are really amplified material. For such material there is a very simple place in the ordinary letter folder, which goes in a letter file, and frequently in specially constructed desk drawers, so that there is always a quantity of such material easily available for the writer.

As soon as you begin to amplify your material, you will find that this second type of filing system is desirable. As soon as you work the material into the outline of a plot, it cannot be typed upon a three by five card; but it can be typed upon an eight and a half by eleven sheet of letter paper, or ordinary typewriter note paper. In such cases, the system which I use is to attach the original card notation to the developed outline; to give it some sort of title, even though it has no formal title; that is to say, it may be the Country Club story,

and under that heading you will proceed to think about it until such time as you hit upon a title which seems to you more desirable and more effective. For example, if your original Country Club notation, made on a three by five card is to the effect that a great many young men are now living beyond their income and are forced to keep up appearances and to belong to Country Clubs which they really cannot afford, because of the competition of their neighbors, who are also living beyond their income, you can expand this into a plot outline by saying that a young man is living beyond his income because he wishes to keep up appearances equivalent to those kept up by his neighbor. When his neighbor buys a new car, he buys a better one, although he is already in debt. He goes to the country club, and discovers there a man who is quite evidently a sheriff's officer, who has come with the intention, he believes, of attaching his car. He hurries home, finds that his wife has the opportunity to hire away from the other woman her nurse, which she does after her own nurse leaves. Later that evening at a Bridge Party, when the neighbor is present, he discovers that the neighbor has hired away his nurse. Also, he finds that the man whom he thought had come to attach his car had really come to attach his neighbor's car. That is a plot outline. Later you can add to it a notation to the effect that the scene between the wife and the husband shall be followed by a scene between the husband and the nurse. This is the amplification, and it will be put in the folder marked The Country Club story. Everything thereafter that occurs to you, until the final revision of that story, will go in that folder.

This system is only useful to you in so far as it suits your needs. It may be that you prefer some other system. It will be a good system for you if it enables you to collect material with less effort than you are doing at present; if it gives you ready access to that material at a time when you want it, and if it cuts down your work in any way. If, on the other hand, it merely adds to your work and causes you confusion of mind it is not a good system.

Problem 12

EMOTIONAL IMPRESSION

TIME, PLACE AND SOCIAL ATMOSPHERE

A well known American writer is quoted as saying "My real success came when I stopped writing and began to *remember*. Everyone who contemplates becoming a writer would do well to ponder over this. Writing is only one phase of producing a story. It is the translation of observation in terms of art. Art, we now know, has as its aim the creation of emotion in the reader. But there are two kinds of emotion which a reader will experience upon reading your story: the first the direct emotion which he would have experienced if he had himself become aware of the Stimuli instead of having the author present them to him; the second the emotion he experiences upon seeing an actor in the story respond to the stimuli presented to the actor by the author. In the first case there are two steps:

1. The reader becomes aware of the stimulus
2. The reader receives an impression of that stimulus.

The emotion in this case is really impressionistic. Here is a case in point:

In a story called "Quick Action," which appeared in the *Ladies' Home Journal* for September, 1926, the author, Martin Knapp, wished to give the reader the impression of a certain kind of room "the kind of room in which only the language of huge and high finance could be spoken without sacrilege."

By the time the reader has read Mr. Knapp's description of

the room he has received the *impression* of that room which the author wished to present to him. He is aware of the social atmosphere. Thus:

"To even the most casual of eyes it must instantly have appeared *the kind* of room in which only the language of huge and high finance could be spoken without sacrilege. It was exactly that kind of a *mahogany room.* It was large and assured. The *great flat* mahogany desk behind which the man sat proclaimed its *importance* by a highly *aristocratic nudity.* Nothing whatever marred the slightly *supercilious glint* of its polished surface except a sheaf of ultra-executive-looking letters and the most expensive inkstand, probably, in the world. The leather upholstery of the portly mahogany chairs protruded with that sleek complacency which can only be attained in the very highest state of opulence; the partly lowered shades at the high windows conveyed all the haughty superiority of raised eyebrows, and, muting the floor, the immense thickness of the expanse of blue rug—coupled with the room's distance from the earth and its proximity to heaven—cast a sort of holy hush over the place which was only violated by the occasional ribald shriek of a tug on the East River. There wasn't any doubt about it. In this sanctuary, words not having to do with money would be profane."

In the second kind of emotion, which the reader experiences upon seeing a character respond to a stimulus, there are five steps:

1. The reader becomes aware of the stimulus
2. The reader receives an impression of that stimulus
3. The reader becomes aware of the actor
4. The reader becomes aware of the actor's response to the stimulus
5. The reader is in some way stirred to approval or disapproval.

The emotion in this case is not only impression, but *feeling.* The feeling may be joy, it may be pity, it may be anger, or it may be any other feeling. To understand this read over

lines 1390 to 1496 of the story "The Face in the Window," by William Dudley Pelley, (Case No. 9, The Case Book).

After reading this series of stimuli and actors' responses, the reader is conscious of an emotion of *feeling* induced by the behavior of an actor in the story—quite distinct from the *impression* of which the reader becomes conscious upon being made aware of a stimulus. Therefore, you as a writer, have two avenues of approach to a reader: through his impressions and through his feelings. The reader will receive his *impressions* from the perception of stimuli which are rendered in terms of sense appeals. Among these will be the image of the actor. The reader will be conscious of *feeling* as a result of observing the responses of an actor.

Knowing your materials, your task as a fiction writer is to combine those materials in such a way that they will cause in the mind of the reader the exact emotional effect, either impression or feeling, that you wish. In order to achieve the fullest effect you must understand how to extract the fullest value from any stimulus, whether that stimulus be a place, a person, a happening, or an idea. This ability, fortunately, can be acquired or developed. It depends upon imagination; and imagination, like everything else in Nature, grows by what it feeds upon. Therein lies the secret of success in writing fiction. The writer's task is selection and rejection. Selection and rejection mark the fiction writer's attitude toward life. The first basic step in becoming a writer of fiction is to develop this attitude, if you possess it; or to acquire it if you do not possess it.

In order to acquire this ability to select and reject, it is necessary that you learn to observe in order that you may have such a large fund of material that you can afford to be discriminating. It is necessary, also, that you have a standard of fitness by which to judge the desirability of your material. You must learn to appraise your material as an artist, keeping in mind that the purpose of art is to appeal to the reader's emotions. You will find that artistically your material will fall into two categories: that which will create

in the reader's consciousness a series of impressions, and that which will stir the reader's feelings.

Fiction, like all literature, is the translation of observation in terms of art. There are other problems for you as fiction writers besides artistic problems; but artistic problems come first. After you have mastered the artistic problem of creating impressions and stirring the reader's feelings you can begin to consider the problem of characterization and the technical problems of sequence and structure which will confront you. Keep before you always that you have the same general problem as the dramatist. A knowledge of methods and materials is essential to you no less than to the dramatist. Do not be misled too much by this general resemblance of your task and that of the dramatist. Remember always that it is not the resemblances in method which should engage your attention, but the divergences.

To understand this divergence in method, consider the effect upon the audience of the same material presented in a play as in a story. If Actor A and Actor B talk, the talk is the same when presented to the audience from the stage as when presented to the readers from the pages of the book or magazine. But the dramatist, having prepared his dialogue, is enabled to call to his assistance the property man, the stage carpenter and the electrician, who combine, through appeals to the senses of the audience, to give the audience an impression of the Time, the Place and the social Atmosphere. As soon as the curtain rises the audience is made aware of and receives an *impression* of the people upon the stage. It is these impressions of setting and people which you as a short-story writer must furnish before you are upon a par with the dramatist.

The impressions of the people I shall leave for later consideration, and shall point out to you now the technical problem which you must solve in respect to furnishing to your readers an impression of Setting, which involves the Time, the Place and the Social Atmosphere. If you will assume always that your readers are an audience and your actors are

present upon a stage you cannot go far wrong. You will be visualizing your material in terms of fiction. In the theatre the audience is never left in doubt as to the background of the action. The audience can tell easily that the background or setting for the action is an English Country House. The audience in the theatre can tell by seeing it that a piece of furniture, for example, is a plush sofa of Queen Anne type. When you work in the medium of the short-story writer, on the other hand, if you consider that sofa to be important in the setting you will have to describe it so that the audience can see it. For the present, it is enough to say that from the dramatist you may take one lesson to heart; never to leave your audience in doubt as to the location of your story. When the curtain rises, the stage is set. It is desirable, then, that you keep in mind this disparity of method between the writer and the dramatist in considering the problem of handling setting in the short-story.

When you enter a theatre, ordinarily you are provided with a programme which indicates the acts, and tells where the action is located. Thus you find:

Act I. A saloon in the Klondike in mid-winter.
Act II. Library in the Fifth Avenue home of Silas K. Wetherbee, the Sugar King.
Act III. Pavement in front of Grace Church, New York City.

Even though you did not receive any programme, you would know, as soon as the curtain rose, just what sort of place was being represented. You could scarcely mistake the "Library in Fifth Avenue home of Silas K. Wetherbee" for "A Saloon in the Klondike," nor would you be likely to confuse "A Saloon in the Klondike" with "Pavement in front of Grace Church, New York City." The properties on the stage would be sufficient to let you know where the action took place; but to be entirely certain that you can give your undivided attention to the action, the dramatist has a programme as a sort of extra pointer. Before the audience is

called upon to judge the actors they are made aware of the actors' *background* at the moment of presentation: The Time, Place and Social Atmosphere are taken care of. This is what is called "Setting." It might better be called "Setting the stage." For after all, that is what you do when you propose to show characters in action. You should never permit your audience to be in doubt as to where the action is taking place, or when. If you do, you have only yourself to blame if the audience constructs a completely wrong setting to begin with, and becomes, consequently, irritated when forced to revise this first picture, or what is worse, having received no impression, feels no illusion of reality, no verisimilitude—no appearance of truth.

Of course, this setting of the stage need not always come before a character is introduced; but its use at some time is essential and inevitable. Some time, in your story, you must use setting, for the bare stage which the Elizabethans found satisfactory would not be tolerated by a modern audience—or by modern actors. The actors in a play or the actors in a short-story ought not to be hampered by the necessity of indicating, themselves, the setting of the stage. Their lines ought to be saved for the advancement of the action—the telling of the story—or for character delineation or portrayal.

One thing you can take for granted: at some time or another in your story, you will be called upon to indicate the setting in which the action takes place.

In your employment of setting, to be completely aware of the possibilities of your materials, you must realize that there are two kinds of Setting at your disposal, the first giving merely the *background* for the action of your characters; the time and place of the action. This kind of setting is used for *plausibility;* to give verisimilitude or the appearance of truth. The second kind of setting, designed to *interest* the reader, is intended to give an *impression* of the background which will convey the social atmosphere. Frequently the two kinds of setting will be merged.

The first kind of setting, designed merely for *plausibility* to give authentic background for the action of the character does so by merely indicating the time and place of the action. It is the sort of setting which is used to indicate the Change of scene when the writer is not particularly interested in conveying an emotional impression, or when he feels that he has previously conveyed sufficiently the impression he wishes. It would be used, for example, to show that the character had moved from the living-room to the dining room ot the same house. This kind of setting, like the setting designed for impression, is based upon observation, but the emphasis is more upon *visualization* than impression. It is essential, however, that you as a writer, wishing to be master of your material, should be able to produce both kinds of setting at will.

Every time you write a story you are faced with the necessity of writing settings of one kind or the other. You set out to describe a place, and a place at a certain time, because the time of day or time of year makes a great deal of difference in any place. The beach at Atlantic City, for example, at three o'clock on a hot afternoon in August is a different place from the same beach at three o'clock on a freezing January morning. But, in addition to describing a definite place at a certain time, you propose in the second kind of setting to produce in the minds of your readers a certain emotional impression of that place which will convey the social atmosphere. The method of composition involved is, therefore, Description.

You will remember that I said before that the more you know of composition in general the more you will be helped in mastering any special form of writing. Now, in spite of all the manuals written upon the subject of Description, and the hours of classroom work devoted to its illustration, many people are still confused as to what is involved in a description. I ask people who are mature, and people who are immature, "What is meant by description? What do you do

when you describe; what do you want to do?" They answer, "To make a picture; I tell what I saw." This, of course, is good as far as it goes; but it does not go far enough. For description involves more than seeing. That you may understand this clearly, let me ask you to consider a more comprehensive definition of the word. Thus: "Description is the building up of an emotional *impression* by reproducing, in the consciousness of your reader or hearer, your *sensations* on a certain occasion."

The important words in this definition are emotional *impression* and *sensations*. In the first place, your description is unsuccessful if you fail to build up the emotional *impression you desire*. In the second place, every emotional *impression* is the sum of the sensations of the observer on that occasion. Finally, your sensations are received through your *senses*, which embrace, besides sight, the other four: taste, touch, smell, and hearing. I do not mean to say that in every description you are to appeal to all of the five senses, because there are certain things that you absorb through only one or two of the senses, or at most through three. But often this is because you have not trained all your senses to observe. I do say, however, and cannot too much emphasize that the more senses you appeal to, the more likely you are to create the impression which you wish to convey. This is simply the old mathematical rule that two chances are better than one.

Some people receive their impressions through their eyes, and respond to eye pictures; others receive their most powerful impressions through the ears. You are all familiar with the person who insists upon writing down a name which is unusual in order that he may visualize it better. *He* receives *his* impressions through his eyes. On the other hand, there is the person who can look upon a name without receiving a definite impression of it; but who understands it clearly as soon as he has heard it. *He* receives *his* impressions through his ear. College teachers know that some men remember from their lectures only what they hear, while others must make written notes in order to *visualize* the words. The

application of all this to your task as a short-story writer is that you should neglect no opportunity or avenue to build up an impression. A grocer, desiring to amplify his list of customers, would not neglect to put on five delivery trucks if he knew it meant more business; a newspaper would not hesitate to add a feature to its make-up if it knew that thereby it could increase its circulation. The rotogravure section and the radio page are cases in point. In other words, with the use of the five senses, no one of your readers can escape; for no matter which one of his senses he employs most in receiving his sensations, if all five are there his particular one is sure to be used.

It was *Impression* which Joseph Conrad had in mind when in his preface to the "Nigger of the Narcissus" he said: "All art, therefore, appeals primarily to the senses, if its high desire is to reach the secret spring of responsive emotions." To be able to create an emotional impression is, when all is said and done, a necessity for the writer. Inevitably it will be based upon his observation, and preferably upon his real experience. But before there is emotion there must be impression; so you see that reduced to its lowest terms, all literature is based upon observation. This observation is, however, only the *basis* for the impression which is made up of the sum of the observer's sensations.

It is the *observer's* impression which is to be reproduced. But sometimes the impression of a certain moment cannot be reproduced exactly because meanwhile it has become colored differently because it is not remembered accurately. That is why it is important to acquire the habit of *recording your observations* on the spot in terms of sensations or sense appeals. Later, upon calmer or more mature consideration you may decide that the impression made upon you by the Setting was a false one; but in that case you will be judging fairly with all the evidence before you and not unfairly as you might have done if your memory has neglected to call to your attention a certain odor, sound or texture which remembered clearly would modify the total impression. There are, there-

fore, three distinct stages in your utilization of material to be rendered as *impression:*

1. The original observation
2. The experience of the impression made up of the sum of your sensations
3. The translation of those sensations in terms of art.

You are a fortunately situated writer indeed if you can instantly find time and opportunity to record at once the result of your observations in those final artistic terms which will reproduce the impression. But no matter how you are situated, you can always record at *the moment* the *essentials* of the emotional impression, which are the sense responses. Whether your recording is immediate or delayed, however, this building up of an impression presupposes, of course, *observation which is the basis of all creative writing.* The faculty of observation is given, as a free gift of nature, to some. Where the gift exists, it is necessary only to develop it; where it does not exist, it must be acquired. You are all familiar with the saying of Sherlock Holmes to his faithful Doctor Watson:

"You see, but you do not observe."

Here is their conversation:

Sherlock Holmes.	"You see, but you do not observe. The distinction is clear. For example, you have frequently seen the steps which lead up from the hall to this room."
Watson.	"Frequently."
S. H.	"How often?"
W.	"Well, some hundreds of times."
S. H.	"Then how many are there?"
W.	"How many? I don't know."

S. H. "Quite so! You have not observed. And yet you have seen. That is just the point. Now, I know that there are seventeen steps, because I have both seen and observed."

This comment upon the average man's lack of observation was not made for the first time by Sherlock Holmes. It was called to the attention of one student of writing by an instructor who was himself a successful writer. Flaubert said it before Sherlock Holmes; and he said it to a man who profited by the remark: Maupassant.

Said Flaubert: "Talent is long patience. When one has something to express he must look at it so long and with such close attention that he discovers in it some aspect that has not been seen and expressed by anyone else. In everything there is something unexplored, because we are accustomed to use our eyes only in connection with our memory of what has been thought before us on the subject we contemplate. The least object contains a little of the unknown. Let us find it. In order to describe a fire that flames and a tree on a plain let us stay in the presence of that fire and that tree until they have ceased to resemble, for us, any other tree or any other fire. It is in this manner that one becomes original."

There are one or two comments to be made upon this excellent advice: the first is that you must be careful to select only those details and to use in your description only those words which will help to build up the impression you wish, and equally careful in rejecting or eliminating all other detail, and all other words; the second, that in seeking the "aspect that has not been seen and expressed by anyone else," you seek it not with your eyes alone, but with all your senses; for the distinguishing feature may be an odor or a sound or a taste, or a texture discernible only to the touch.

You can now feel a mastery of your material. You know that setting involves description, and that the PURPOSE of

description is to build up for the reader either a background or an impression. The words "build up" are used advisedly; for you build up cumulatively through your appeals to the different senses. They are your materials:

Taste	Sight:	(a) Form
Touch		(b) Location
Smell		(c) Color
Hearing		(d) Movement

The thing to be borne in mind is that the reader is helpless in your hands. You can force him to experience any sensation you desire; how well you do it depends, of course, upon your craftsmanship. But, you can determine in advance the impression you desire, and having determined it you can build it up. You can begin with the opening sentence of your description: what is known as the "topic sentence." This "topic sentence" sets the mood, prepares the mind of the reader for the details which will elaborate that mood or impression. Apart from this topic sentence, inevitably, however, the materials you use will be words selected for their appeal to one or more senses. For example, suppose you propose to build up an impression of loneliness or an impression of beauty, you, knowing in advance, can play upon the emotions of your reader by appealing to his senses. The difference will be in your interpretation, in the thing you stress.

If your topic sentence says "What had yesterday been a vacant lot was now a hive of activity," you will stress the workmen hurrying with wheelbarrows of cement; the clatter of shovel against broken stone; the frantic foreman bellowing orders; the staccato exhaust of the steam-shovel; because those details contribute to the effect of a "hive of industry" but you would not include the dog sleeping in the shadow with head between outstretched paws, because that detail would not contribute. I do not say that you will deliberately begin every description with a topic sentence. I merely urge you to consider carefully the advantage which its use places in your

hands. First, it enables you to lead your reader to feel the emotion you wish; second, it gives you a standard against which to check your detail.

This care in detail will apply, of course, particularly to that sort of setting designed to convey Atmosphere or Impression. In that sort of Setting designed merely to give Background for the Action it is important merely that the time and place be indicated.

"It was two o'clock in the afternoon when the man brought the sleigh to a stop at the point a mile from Plympton Village, where the woodsroad began its five-mile traverse of the open space flanking the sea that the Cape Cod residents called THE PLAIN."

Perhaps what I am trying to convey to you in regard to Setting will be clearer if you glance over the program of the play "Old English" by John Galsworthy, and try to visualize the setting of the first act merely from the words of the program.

WINTHROP AMES

presents

GEORGE ARLISS

in

"OLD ENGLISH"

A Play In Three Acts by John Galsworthy

The Characters (As They Appear)	The Players
Sylvanus Heythorp, Chairman of "The Island Navigation Company"	George Arliss
Gilbert Farney, Secretary of the same	Frederick Earle
Bob Pillin, of Pillin & Son, shipowners	Deering Wells
Charles Ventner, a Solicitor	Stafford Dickens
Mr. Brownbee, a Creditor of old Heythorp	Norman Cannon
Clergyman, another Creditor	Eustace Wyatt
Rosamund Larne, a connection of old Heythorp	Irby Marshall
Phyllis, Jock — her children	Cecile Dixon, George Walcott
Joseph Pillin, Senior Partner of Pillin & Son	Ivan F. Simpson
Adela Heythorp, Daughter of old Heythorp	Ethel Griffies
Two Clerks of "The Island Navigation Company"	Edmund George, Victor Weston

A Director Mr. Batterson Mr. Westgate Mr. Winkley Mr. Budgeon Mr. Appleby	Shareholders of the Company	James Hughes Langford Hayes Horace Cooper M. Murray Stephens Arthur Villars Thomas Donnelly
Letty, the Larnes' Maid-of-all-work		Henrietta Goodwin
Meller, old Heythorp's Body-Servant		Henry Morrell
Molly, his Daughter's House-maid		Molly Johnson

Directors, Shareholders, Creditors, etc.

Time—1905

Act I

Scene 1—The Board Room of "The Island Navigation Company" in Liverpool. February 12th, five o'clock.

Scene 2—The Same. February 13th, three o'clock, during and after the General Meeting.

Act II

The Larnes' Sitting Room at 23 Millicent Villas, Liverpool. February 13th, four o'clock.

Act III

Scene 1—Old Heythorp's Sanctum in his Daughter's house in Sefton Park. February 14th, five o'clock.

Scene 2—The Same. Three hours later.

Scene 3—The Same. At 11:30 the same night.

Intermissions

The Curtain will be lowered for a moment between the Scenes in Act I and in Act III to indicate the passing of time.

Mr. Galsworthy used the same actors and the same material in a short-story. The title alone was different. The story was called "The Stoic." What is significant for you in comparing the two forms is that in the short-story the author, realizing the necessity for rendering as author the *impression* of time, place, and social atmosphere which the audience received *direct* from the stimuli, in the stage presentation, opened his story thus:—

"In the city of Liverpool, on a January day of 1905, the Board-room of the Island Navigation Company rested, as it were, after the labours of the afternoon. The long table was still littered with the ink, pens, blotting-paper, and abandoned documents of six persons—a deserted battlefield of the brain."

You will see that in about four lines of typewriting Mr. Galsworthy has presented to his audience of *readers* as opposed to his audience of seers the Time, Place, and Social Atmosphere. The readers thereafter need not wonder where the action is taking place, nor when. Certainly a four line paragraph is not too great a strain upon the impatience of the reader who is waiting for the persons to arrive upon the stage. You can, of course, give more space if you so desire.

The amount of space you will devote to rendering an impression of a setting will depend upon how much you wish to impress that setting upon your reader's consciousness. O. Henry was the master of the swift opening sentence, which gave in a flash sufficient indication of the setting:

From: *A Madison Square Arabian Night.*

"To Carson Chalmers, in his apartment near the square,	PLACE
Philips	SOCIAL ATMOSPHERE (He has a servant)
brought the *evening* mail."	TIME

From: *The Social Triangle.*

"At the Stroke of Six	TIME
Ikey Snigglefritz laid down his goose.	PLACE (A tailor-shop)
Ikey was a *tailor's apprentice.*"	SOCIAL ATMOSPHERE

From: *The Count and the Wedding Guest.*

"*One evening*	TIME
when Andy Donovan went to dinner at his Second Avenue boarding house, Mrs. Scott introduced him to a new boarder, a young lady, Miss Conway."	PLACE AND SOCIAL ATMOSPHERE

From: *While the Auto Waits.*

"Promptly at the *beginning of twilight*	TIME
came again to that quiet corner of that *quiet small park,* the girl in gray."	PLACE AND SOCIAL ATMOSPHERE

But O. Henry was notoriously uninterested in Setting. Speaking of it, he said:

"People say I know New York. Well, just change 23rd Street in one of my New York stories to Main Street; rub out the Flatiron Building, and put in the Town Hall; and the story will fit just as truly in any up-state town. . . . So long as a story is true to human nature, all you need to do is change the local color to fit any town, North, East, South or West."

This is a penetrating observation. Setting should not occupy much space. Change a word here and there and you change the complete impression. The social atmosphere of poverty may be made that of luxury or of thrifty simplicity.

This building up of any impression you wish rests entirely with you, the writer: you have the same advantage as the dealer who uses "stacked" cards. You can deal any combination you choose; how successfully you do it depends upon your capacity as an artist, upon your ability to conceal the mechanism, but primarily upon your keenness of observation. This keenness of observation you can develop. Granted always that you have the use of your senses you can develop them, as you develop everything else, by use.

You will find yourself wondering, at this point, whether or not this closer observation is not, after all, an unnecessary chore. You will probably have this same reaction to all suggestions involving a great deal of drill. Somebody who has sold some stories written about a locale with which he is unfamiliar will assure you that first-hand acquaintance with your settings is not necessary. There is only one answer to this. If your setting accomplishes your object by giving the reader the illusion of reality, you are successful. Otherwise, you are not. But if you examine the stories that live you will find that except in rare cases the writers depended upon observation, and wrote only about places with which they were familiar. Certainly no writer can consistently write about places of which he is ignorant. At the basis of all successful creative writing is the law that without observation there can be no successful creation over any sustained period.

But, in considering this, keep in mind also that this observation is of greatest value *when it is recorded at the time.* Even though this immediate recording may consist of mere fragmentary notations of sense responses it is valuable for two reasons. First, it teaches exactness of observation, which requires *concentrated attention.* Second, it helps memory later, because concentrated attention fixes its object in the memory of the observer.

These mere fragmentary notations, consulted after the original impression has become dulled or clouded, fire the imagination and enable the writer to visualize clearly many objects in the scene which had entirely passed from his memory, and which would have been lost to him forever if the notations had not served as a stimulus to memory. Yet, these notations have a more important service to perform in helping the writer, in that the sensations which they serve to recreate, form, summed up, his own impression. Without the original notations, this emotional effect could not have been reproduced with fidelity.

You will see clearly now that although observation is the basis of all first-rate creative writing, it is really useless without creative imagination. As far as my own observation and experience goes, at any rate, there is no such thing as abstract creative ability, in the sense of creating or making something from nothing. With the fiction writer creative imagination consists solely in reacting imaginatively to any stimulus. This imaginative response will be either intellectual or emotional. If it is intellectual it will be concerned with an idea or opinion; if it is emotional it will be concerned with images.

It is the intellectual faculty in a writer which enables him to classify and arrange the result of his observation structurally and to amplify and explain; it is the emotional faculty which enables him to translate that observation in images, or pictorially. The Chinese have a motto which every writer might well have framed and hung up over his desk, side by side with the remark of Sherlock Holmes to Watson—"You see; but you do not observe." The Chinese motto is "One picture is worth a hundred thousand words." Try to make images or pictures for

your readers. Keep this in mind when you are observing, and particularly when you are recording.

It is well to train your observation from the beginning. Place and Time you must have. In making notations of settings it is well to give those particulars first. Follow with the conditions of light or shade. Observe, then, those details appealing to sight. Following that, observe sounds, then smells. Under sound you will almost unconsciously make notes of appeals to the sense of touch (smooth, hard, etc.) Here is a sample notation. You will note in it that there are people mentioned; but they are noted not as actors, but as part of the detail of the setting; they are people as stimuli. In the next lecture we shall consider people as actors:

Veterans' Bureau, Boston, Oct. 23rd, A.M.

Grey light from dull sky. Corridor for physical examination. Rooms divided by wallboard partition. Sign:

"Prosthetic Appliances." Cigarette butts, burned matches on floor; janitor sweeps up. Number of men sitting on benches, accustomed to waiting—expressions of bored disgust. At desk woman who takes letters, gives round cardboard disks with number in blue crayon. Fat woman in nurses' uniform and cap sits holding pulse of man mouthing thermometer—people are cases to her—institutional routine. Doctors in white jackets stroll out looking bored. Young women; rouged; short skirted—Joseph's Coat sweaters, carrying manilla folders of papers giving glimpse through open door of file rooms.

Sounds: Loud clatter of typewriters rising in crescendo as doors open, diminish as they close. Young woman's voice calls a number—repeated along benches. Coughs from rooms. Season of colds. Men converse in low tones about disabilities —"He couldn't hardly lift his arm and the doc give it a jerk."

Interviewed by stenographer, who asks questions and types answers on blank—instead of copying from similar blank filled in year ago.

The principle I wish you to grasp from a study of this Lecture is that all *Impression* comes from detail. It is the sum of

sense appeals. If the total impression is blurred, you as an artist can clarify it, by selection and rejection. You can determine in advance the Impression you wish. Furthermore, you can guide the reader's receptivity by a topic sentence. Chiefly, however, I want you to see that the total number of words devoted to Setting in any story must be a very small proportion of your total. Setting is, of itself, not fiction material. It is just as much the material of the non-fiction writer. It gives Plausibility to the background of the Story. The story itself and its scenes are the important part of FICTION.

Problem 13

EMOTIONAL IMPRESSION

ACTORS

Your task is essentially the same as that of the dramatist. The similarity between the task of the dramatist and your task as a short-story writer applies particularly to that portion of your task which deals with creating life-like characters. Whether you present your characters to your readers upon a stage or from the pages of a magazine or book, your purpose is the same: to set your stage, to introduce your actors to your audience, and to allow the audience to see the actors, whether that audience be readers or theater goers. Lest there be any doubt in your minds, let me again call your attention to John Galsworthy's play "Old English." Here is what is presented to the audience in the theater:

Heythorp: Have they come, Mr. Farney?

Farney: Yes, Sir; but I wasn't going to wake you.

Heythorp: Haven't been asleep. Let 'em wait. Suppose you know what they've come for.

Farney: Did I understand, Sir, it was a meeting of your—er—creditors?

Heythorp. You did. Gold-mine, Mr. Farney.

Farney. Yes, Sir, I've heard—in Ecuador, wasn't it?

Heythorp. (*Nodding*): Thirteen years ago. Bought it, lock, stock and barrel—half in cash, half in promises. These are the promises. Never been able to pay 'em off. The mine was empty as their heads. (*Rumbling.*) Well, not bankrupt yet.

Farney: No, indeed, Sir. No one could get *you* down. Your speech for our General Meeting tomorrow? I suppose I'm to word it according to the decision of the Board this afternoon to buy the Pillin Ships. That's a big thing, Sir.

Heythorp: Never rest on your oars; go forward or you go back. *Toujours de l'audace !*

Farney: I should like to have that on our writing paper, Sir. "The Island Navigation Company —*Toujours de l'audace.*" But I must say I hope freights have touched bottom. Sixty thousand pounds is a lump for a small company like ours to lay out; there's bound to be some opposition from the shareholders.

Heythorp: They'll come to heel."

Let me take this occasion to point again to the three factors in the production of any work of art. The material, the artist and his audience. The medium in which an artist renders his material will dictate his treatment. This particular play illustrates this. The audience when this material was presented to them as a play had seen a program. Here it is:

OLD ENGLISH

A play in three acts

by

JOHN GALSWORTHY

Sylvanus Heythorp, Chairman of "The Island Navigation Company"
Gilbert Farney, Secretary of the same
Bob Pillin, of Pillin & Son, Shipowners
Charles Ventner, a Solicitor
Mr. Brownbee, a Creditor of old Heythorp
Clergyman, another Creditor
Rosamund Larne, a connection of old Heythorp
Phyllis } her children
Jock }
Joseph Pillin, Senior Partner of Pillin & Son
Adela Heythorp, a daughter of old Heythorp
Two Clerks, of "The Island Navigation Company"
A Director

Mr. Batterson
Mr. Westgate
Mr. Winkley
Mr. Budgeon
Mr. Appleby
} Shareholders of the Company

Letty, the Larnes' Maid-of-all-work
Meller, old Heythorp's Body-servant
Molly, his daughter's House-maid

Directors, Shareholders, Creditors, etc.

Time 1905

Act I

Scene 1—The Board Room of "The Island Navigation Company" in Liverpool, Feb. 12th, 5 o'clock.
Scene 2—The same. Feb. 13, 3 o'clock, during and after the General Meeting.

Act II

The Larnes' Sitting-room at 2 Millicent Villas, Liverpool.
Feb. 13, 4 o'clock.

Act III

Scene 1—Old Heythorp's Sanctum in his daughter's house in Sefton Park.
Feb. 14, 5 o'clock.
Scene 2—The Same. Three hours later.
Scene 3—The Same. At 11:30 the same night.
In Acts I and III curtain lowered for lapse of time.
Given in Boston at the Shubert-Wilber Theatre—Nov. 16, 1925.
" " New York at the Ritz Theatre, 48th Street west of Broadway.

by

Lee and J. J. Shubert.

(Copied from program on file in the Widemer Library)

This program tells the audience the names of the actors, and their social status. The audience learns from the program that Sylvanus Heythorp is the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Island Navigation Company, and that Gilbert Farney is the secretary of that Board. From the program they have learned, also, that Act I is laid in the Island Navigation Company, in Liverpool, England, on February 12th, 1905, at 5 P.M. When the curtain rises the people in the audience at the play see the Board Room, its furnishings, it occupants. They become aware of the location of each object, and of the position and posture of each actor. In plain sight and hearing before

them on the stage are the setting and the actors. Consider for a moment the problem of craftsmanship which confronts the story-writer who wishes to render this same material in a story rather than in a drama. Mr. Galsworthy has done it. You will find the example in his works published by his American publishers, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. "Old English" the play is a small, handy volume, well worth your perusal. Rendered as a story the material is the same as that of the play; the name is changed from "Old English" to "The Stoic." You can read it in the volume "Five Tales" or the later collection, called "Caravan."

Certain limitations of medium make it necessary for the writer to change the order and the proportion of his scenes; but the same material is employed in both the play and the story. But when the material is rendered in the form of the short-story, the short-story writer, to be on a par with the dramatist, must keep before him always the thought of his audience, the third factor in the problem. The play goer finds the stage set; he can see and hear the actors; the illusion of reality is complete. The person watching the stage and the actors receives an impression of the place and the people. The lighting conditions give him an impression of time; so that he is aware almost at a glance of the Time, Place, and Social Atmosphere.

In writing a story, you are trying to give an illusion of reality, of actual conditions of life. The nearest parallel to life is the stage presentation of life. You, as a story-writer, have exactly the same problem as the dramatist, except that you have certain advantages that are denied to him. For example you can change the background of the action as frequently as you desire. The "movies" have this advantage, also; now with the "talkies," they are no longer denied the use of extended conversation. In presenting his material through the medium of either the movies or the legitimate stage, the author is denied the chance to analyze the thoughts of characters; whatever is passing in the minds of the characters must be shown by the action of those characters.

BUT—in life and on either the legitimate or the motion pic-

ture stage, the audience is always made aware of the appearance of an actor *the very first moment that actor appears.* Occasionally a voice is heard from somebody "off-stage," but this concealment is intentional. The author does not wish the audience to see the speaker. If you intend to give your readers the impression of a visible actor you must describe that actor's appearance. Keep in mind always that in a very few words you can give a description of an actor that will serve the audience to identify that actor. Try always to think of your readers as an audience, of the people in your stories as actors, and of the places in which the action takes place as the stage setting or background for that action. You will be helped very much in visualizing your people and their actions. Then, whenever an actor either comes on the stage or changes position upon that stage, let the audience know about it. This is a sound rule to follow. In fact, it is better to overdo it than to neglect it. The reader can always skip if there is too much; but he will not exert himself to fill in if there is too little. The reader does not have the same advantage as the playgoer; therefore, before the author can hope to get the same effect by presenting his material in a story that he does in presenting his material in a theatre, he must set his stage and introduce his actors.

Here is the opening of "The Stoic," with the material presented as a story:

"In the City of Liverpool, on a January day of 1905, the Board-room of the 'Island Navigation Company' rested, as it were, after the labours of the afternoon. The long table was still littered with the ink, pens, blotting-paper, and abandoned documents of six persons—a deserted battlefield of the brain."

There, in two sentences, Mr. Galsworthy sets his stage, establishes the Time, the Place, and the Social Atmosphere. Having done this he at once introduces his actors; first, the chief actor, Sylvanus Heythorp; and next, an actor with a subordinate part, Gilbert Farney.

"And, lonely, in his chairman's seat at the top end, old Sylvanus Heythorp sat, with closed eyes, still and heavy as an image. One puffy, feeble hand, whose fingers quivered, rested

on the arm of his chair; the thick white hair on his massive head glistened in the light from a green-shaded lamp. He was not asleep, for every now and then his sanguine cheeks filled, and a sound, half sigh, half grunt, escaped his thick lips between a white moustache and the tiny tuft of white hairs above his cleft chin. Sunk in the chair that square thick trunk of a body in short black-braided coat seemed divested of all neck.

"Young Gilbert Farney, secretary of the 'Island Navigation Company,' entering his hushed Board room, stepped briskly to the table, gathered some papers, and stood looking at his Chairman. Not more than thirty-five, with the bright hues of the optimist in his hair, beard, cheeks, and eyes, he had a nose and lips which curled ironically."

In regard to the chief actor you have some salient details of description, details which would be apparent to anyone observing that actor for the first time. You know, in addition, something which you could not ordinarily deduce from his appearance, something for which a further knowledge of the man is necessary; yet something which throws light upon the man's subsequent action: you know his name and occupation or profession; his social status. He is Sylvanus Heythorp, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Island Navigation Company. You know just what he is doing at the moment, and you have some inkling of what he has been doing in the immediate, and even in the remote past. You are enabled to visualize that person, and to some extent surmise the quality of his actions thereafter. Those salient or outstanding details of appearance coupled with the indication of occupational or social status are sufficient at the beginning to *identify* Sylvanus Heythorp as being different from Gilbert Farney, for example, or from a clergyman, or a tramp. To characterize him fully you need more than that. But mark this: your readers know more about him than if they had been told merely his name. They now have become aware of an actor's image, which gives them an impression of reality.

By this naïve belief that a name alone is all that is necessary to make a character, you may identify the amateur writer.

Strangely enough, this amateur-writer is usually the very first person to demand detail in a conversation involving a third person. "Who is this Mary Fleming you're always talking about," he'll say. "Is she that fat girl who works in Blanchard Rowlings's office?" But let him write a story in which he presents to strangers this fat girl whom he is supposed to know intimately enough to place in a story, and nine times out of ten he'll begin, "Blanchard Rowlings stopped Mary Fleming on the street in front of her bungalow and said," etc. Then the story proceeds to unfold itself through the conversation of ghost-like presences of whom the reader knows only the names. The great Professor Copeland, the dean of teachers of composition, in his famous English Twelve course at Harvard always was quick to point out the necessity for a sight of the characters. "I don't see your people," he would say. "Are you writing about ghosts?"

Now, there are conceivable circumstances under which it is desirable to conceal the identity of the character; but this can be done in a number of different ways; never by a failure to describe him. From the outward appearance of a person you can learn a great deal that will serve to differentiate him from all other persons, or certainly from a great many other persons. *Age* is the first instinctive classification we make of others. It may be indicated in many ways: by color of hair, by wrinkles or their absence, by teeth or their lack.

Social Status. With this first classification made, you begin to be conscious of an impression of a person, and from that impression you arrive at some general classification of the person's social status. Clothing is important in this regard, especially as it shows other things, too: temperament, good taste or its lack are shown by the selection of clothing and the manner of wearing it. But these are not what I have in mind so much now as the general classification of social status which comes from the impression that a person gives of being poorly dressed or carelessly dressed.

There is the further physical impression of the actor, which will compensate your reader for the impression of the actor that

he would have received had that actor appeared to him first in real life, or from a stage, or upon the screen, instead of from the printed page. If you will think of your story as a repetition of the basic pattern, stimulus, actor impression, response, you will see that what actually happens in a story is that the character appears (his name and occupation the author makes clear, either on a program or in explanatory notations, depending upon whether he is writing in the medium of the drama or of the story), the audience takes in a few salient details of his appearance: his age; his social status, his clothing, his height, his bulk, perhaps his complexion (dark or fair), perhaps the color of his hair.

Your next classification, then, will be the salient details of appearance. By salient details are meant those details which at once assail you—the things about a person's appearance that "hit you in the eye"; a hare-lip, a scar, a moon-like roundness of contour, a breadth of shoulder, a slimness, a deformity, a heightened complexion, a brightness of eye.

An examination of thousands of manuscripts from beginning writers has almost convinced me that an agreement has been reached by all amateurs to delay the description of the appearance of the actors in their stories. On the other hand, an examination of published stories would lead to the conclusion that among professional writers an agreement existed that the reader should be given facility for receiving an impression of the actor at the earliest possible moment. The amateur confronted with this, and asked for a reason for the delay, will reply vaguely that he thought it more artistic. Pressed for an explanation, he has none, and falls back upon saying, "Anyway, I describe my chief actor on the next page." This is exactly like saying that a playwright left his audience in total darkness for the first few minutes of the opening act of a play, and then switched on the lights. The absurdity of delaying the description of an actor upon that actor's entrance is readily seen when you recollect that you are trying to reproduce for your readers the impression of real life. In real life whenever you meet a person, you receive an impression of that person. But even

though you feel that art and life differ, one inescapable fact remains. Somewhere you must render a short identifying description of your actor. Six or eight typewritten lines will suffice. You can always change the relative point in your story at which you introduce those six or eight lines. You will, however, be following the best professional practice if you describe the actor at the moment of entrance. Here are some examples of descriptions of actors which will give you an idea of how much of an impression may be given in six or eight typewritten lines:

"This was the idea of Stella Ashurst, whose character contained a streak of sentiment. If she had long lost the blue-eyed, flower-like charm, the cool slim purity of face and form, the apple-blossom colouring, which had so swiftly and so oddly affected Ashurst twenty-six years ago, she was still at forty-three a comely and faithful companion, whose cheeks were faintly mottled, and whose grey-blue eyes had acquired a certain fulness."

John Galsworthy: "The Apple-Tree" (In "Caravan," *Scribner's.*)

"Farr Dunkin was a mild and gentle man and Mrs. Dunkin had little of the harshness which is so often an attribute of the women of such a community, so Ned had grown up as a mild and gentle boy. He was now a mild and gentle young man; a young man better than six feet tall, with a lean and adequate strength. But his eyes were softly blue and his cheek was as fresh and smooth and as delicately colored as that of the loveliest girl, and his light beard, smoothly razored, failed to mar its texture. His fair hair was curly, and since it was infrequently cut, it was apt to tangle itself into a glinting mass upon his head. He might fairly have been called beautiful, and this word, when applied to a man, is more apt than not to be a term of opprobrium."

Ben Ames Williams: "Foreheads Villainous." (*Saturday Evening Post.*)

"A man of forty-five or thereabouts, you would have taken him to be, had you been with me in that odorous smoking car. He was tall, well-knit, distinguished. The front of his well-shaped head was bald, but a powdery fluff of silver at each bronzed temple made him vaguely handsome. And yet—there were lines in his face which should not have been there."

William Dudley Pelley: "A Father Who Dared." (*Red Book,* July, 1925.)

"Pethick was in my real-estate office in Harlem one Saturday afternoon—Horace T. Pethick; you may have heard of him. Pethick sells North River brick and Cow Bay sand; I was putting up a flat up in the Bronx at the time. He had a cigar, and sat around talking of this and that, and waiting for me to ask him out to lunch. He's quite a fellow—big, imposing, chin whisker and white waistcoat; he likes to talk and I like to hear him."

Thomas McMorrow: "Mr. Pethick Meets the Check Grabbers." (*Saturday Evening Post,* Feb. 28, 1925.)

"Tall she was, and lovely in a cold statuesque way, though inclined to thinness. Her eyes were light blue and her hair was the color of ashes. Because her complexion was creamy and transparent she blushed when spoken to, or when not spoken to, and this marked her as a strange soul, for in Hollywood less than four per cent of the population know the first thing about blushing."

Frank Condon: "Mud." (*S. E. P.,* Sept. 12, 1925.)

"Bouncer Bosanquet came through the door. 'A paunchy man of forty with a roving black eye, wavy black hair and a large black moustache which he was wont to twirl with an air of irresistibility. . .'

"The next morning, Mr. Bosanquet entered the shop with a companion, rather paunchier, who gave the impression that he

was lurking with a disquieting stealthiness behind the massive gold chain which lay across his lower bosom."

Edgar Jepson: "Prince Sarrazin's Frogs." (*S. E. P.*, Sept. 12, 1925.)

"She was a full-blown girl, large for her age, supple as a panther and almost as deadly. She had jet-black eyes and blacker hair—a wealth of it, which she had not bobbed. The charcoal of her hair and the chalkiness of her flesh permitted vivid colors to become her admirably; a gown of scarlet now revealed her shoulders and arms. She likewise wore a filet of silver leaves on her forehead like a miniature coronet; she had just finished dressing for a dinner at the John Stevens house up on Preston Hill."

Wilber Daniel Steele: "For They Know Not What They Do" (1919 *O. Henry Memorial*).

"He stood at the window of one of the big shipping offices in Cockspur Street. He was a nondescript figure, shabby in such a way that nobody would have noticed he was shabby. Nobody would have noticed him at all. His overcoat was six years old; his boots were turned over. His hair when last cut had been cut by a backstreet barber who had left little tufts where they should not be. His trousers bagged far out from the knee. His hands were clasped in front of him and the fingers were wrestling with each other, and his sharp nose was almost on the glass. You would have said from his figure that his age was about forty, and it was; though his face was the keen, simple face of an awkward youth."

Thomas Burke: "Adventure" (*East of the Mansion House*).

In considering this problem of the impression of actor, you will do well to keep clearly before you the distinction between the impression you will give your reader of an actor at the mo-

ment of entrance and the impression you will allow your readers to gather of that actor during the time he is upon the stage. They both involve actor image; but in the first case the image is a static one, whereas in the second the image is of a person in action and is dynamic. The first is to give an impression of appearance, and that description would be essentially the same if the person were sitting or standing still, or if he were entering upon the stage. The second is to give an impression of his movements after his entrance—the subtle movements which go far in identifying people. Frequently overlooked, as they are, those subtle helps to the readers' visualization are so indispensable that their recognition by an author marks one of his most important advances in technique. They are often aids to the reader's understanding of the characteristics of the actor; but I want you to consider them now in the light of actor images which help to give plausibility to your story.

They are the subtle responses to stimuli. The change of facial expression, the kind of laugh, the tone of voice, the posture, the glance, the gesture, the gait.

The amateur errs here, perhaps, more than in any other phase of craftsmanship. Ordinarily, he begins with description running somewhat as follows: "She was a slim slip of a girl, still in her twenties, with liquid brown eyes and soft wavy chestnut hair, dressed in a neat tailored suit and a trim little toque." There the visual impression ends, and from then until the end of the story that is the only visual impression the reader has of the girl. It is as if a character appeared upon the stage just long enough to allow the audience a glimpse of him and then disappeared never to be seen again during the course of the play, leaving a phonograph to carry on his part. Sometimes in such cases a passable plot is sufficient to keep the interest of the reader to the end of the story. But no character emerges; the incidents might just as well have happened to "A tall, athletic-looking girl, twenty-three or -four years old, with blue eyes and straight black hair, dressed in a sport suit and a tam-o-shanter." What you have is not a real person, but a dummy for a department store window, inoffensive, perhaps,

to the eye, but entirely unconvincing as regards being life-like.

Such description is good as far as it goes; it is necessary, but in too many cases, with the amateur, it stops there. The figure does not possess the life of even a movie extra. Still, it is a good start, a foundation upon which to build the character of a living, moving, breathing person, who has ideas, who feels emotions, who reacts to stimuli. This short identifying description is the natural thing.

One of the most illuminating comments upon this phase of craftsmanship was made by Mark Twain. He, more than any other writer, was consciously aware of this necessity for draping unclothed words. Once, after an interesting talk with Mark Twain, Edward Bok, then editor of the *Ladies' Home Journal,* wrote an account of the interview. When he sent the manuscript to the humorist for his perusal and comment, Mark Twain replied, characteristically:—

My dear Mr. Bok:

No, no—it is like most interviews, pure twaddle, and valueless.

For several quite plain and simple reasons, an "interview" must, as a rule, be an absurdity. And chiefly for this reason: it is an attempt to use a boat on land, or a wagon on water, to speak figuratively. Spoken speech is one thing, written speech is quite another. Print is a proper vehicle for the latter, but it isn't for the former. The moment "talk" is put into print you recognize that it is not what it was when you heard it; you perceive that an immense something has disappeared from it. That is its soul. You have nothing but a dead carcass left on your hands. Color, *play of feature, the varying modulations of voice, the laugh, the smile, the informing inflections,* everything that gave that body warmth, grace, friendliness, and charm, and commended it to your affection, or at least to your tolerance, is gone, and nothing is left, but a pallid, stiff, and repulsive cadaver.

Such is "talk," almost invariably, as you see it lying in state in an "interview." The interviewer seldom tries to

tell one *how* a thing was said; he merely puts in the naked remark, and stops there. When one writes for print, his methods are very different. He follows forms which have but little resemblance to conversation, *but they make the reader understand what the writer is trying to convey.* And when the writer is making a story, and finds it necessary to report some of the talk of his characters, observe how cautiously and anxiously he goes at that risky and difficult thing:

"If he had dared to say that thing in my presence," said Alfred, *taking a mock heroic attitude, and casting an arch glance upon the company,* "blood would have flowed."

"If he had dared to say that thing in my presence," said Hawkwood, *with that in his eye which caused more than one heart in that guilty assemblage to quake,* "blood would have flowed."

"If he had dared to say that thing in my presence," said the paltry blusterer, *with valor on his tongue and pallor on his lips,* "blood would have flowed."

So painfully aware is the novelist that naked talk in print conveys no meaning, that he loads, and often overloads, almost every utterance of his characters with explanations and interpretations. It is a loud confession that print is a poor vehicle for "talk," it is a recognition that uninterpreted talk in print would result in confusion to the reader, not instruction.

Now, in your interview you have certainly been most accurate; you have set down the sentences I uttered as I said them. But you have not a word of explanation; *what my manner was at several points is not indicated.* Therefore, no reader can possibly know where I was in earnest and where I was joking; or whether I was joking altogether or in earnest altogether. Such a report of a conversation has no value. It can convey many meanings to the reader, but never the right one. To add interpretations which would convey the right meaning is a something which would require what? An art so high and fine and difficult that no possessor of it would ever be allowed to waste it on interviews.

No; spare the reader and spare me; leave the whole interview out; it is rubbish. I wouldn't talk in my sleep if I couldn't talk better than that.

If you wish to print anything, print this letter; it may have some value, for it may explain to a reader here and there why it is that in interviews as a rule men seem to talk like anybody but themselves.

Sincerely yours,
MARK TWAIN.

Here are some examples of how careful professional writers are to etch in the details of their actors' subtle responses to stimuli so that the visual impression is strengthened. You will find some repetitions in these examples, the same set of responses being shown to indicate facial expression as to indicate, let us say, tone of voice. They will serve to show you that the competent professional author uses every possible device to create the complete impression of reality.

FACIAL EXPRESSION

Golden Book, "Beauty's Sister," by Owen Johnson.

" 'Beauty Sawtelle'—sat adjusting his skate on the edge of the pond, *with a look of ponderous responsibility on the freckled face.*"

"She's an awfully nice girl,' said Sawtelle, looking down in a desperate endeavor to control his voice."

Saturday Evening Post, Sept. 12, 1925—"Prince Sarrazin's Frogs," by Edgar Jepson.

"Anne Calhoun's eyes opened wide; and in the hushed voice of immense astonishment she said, 'Why, you extraordinary girl.' "

"An expression of uneasy dismay slowly spread over Anne Calhoun's face."

" 'M'm—did you notice his hands?' said Miss Timmins; and she made a face at the thought of those pudgy paws and dirty nails."

"A slight, rather surprised frown furrowed Mr. Bosanquet's narrow brow, and he said,—"

"Mr. Tucker gently drew a chair and revealed his famous smile."

"'Yes, sir,' said Mr. Tucker, sipping his coffee and permitting his smile to expand and warm the comedians."

Saturday Evening Post—Sept. 12, 1925—"Rivers to Cross," Roland Pertwee.

"He hesitated. *Eagerness came into his face,* his fingers twitched nervously, then fastened round the letters."

"In the anteroom were Chalice and Craven. Chalice sprang to his feet as I came in, but responding to a touch from Craven, sat down with an air of embarrassment."

"There was a pause in which Sir Francis drummed his fingers upon the table. His mouth was tightly compressed and his brows knit."

"For a long while he looked at me. There was something queerly naïve in his expression."

Woman's Home Companion—May 1926, "With Banners Blowing," by Barry Benefield.

"And he went slowly around the house to the front gate, looking back several times and smiling shyly, his dimple dancing in his cheek."

Woman's Home Companion—May 1926, "Papa And The Girls," by Marion Poschman Valensi.

"But even in such an emergency Sally knew her rôle. She lifted the extravagant curtain of her lashes and allowed the red-haired one to see that she wept. Sally's tears were as lovely as crystal dewdrops in the heart of a wild rose. The red-haired one blinked, made some inarticulate noises in his throat, started to get up, turned white and sat down again."

"Now as she looked up at the quite handsome young man who had almost slain her, a quiet, competent and thoroughly sympathetic expression crept into her lovely eyes. She got to her feet with surprising alertness."

Woman's Home Companion—May 1926, "Her Son's Wife," by Dorothy Canfield.

"She looked up at the opening door, a terrible expression of hysteric fear on her face."

Scribner's, April 1925, "Jonesy Gets His Swim," by Edwin Cole Dickinson.

"Jonesy's face grew long. He could not find his tongue. 'I got held up, sir,' he stammered at last."

Hearst's International—Nov. 1924, "The Painted Veil," by W. Somerset Maugham.

"He gave her a little smile as she looked at him; he was forty-one, but he had the lithe figure and the springing step of a boy."

POSTURE

Golden Book, "Beauty's Sister," by Owen Johnson.

"Beauty, murmuring an inaudible reply, stood turning and twisting, desperately seeking to frame a demand."

"Beauty gulping down something that rose in his throat, started aimlessly to skirt the edge of the pond."

"Sawtelle shut his lips, struck a valiant blow at an imaginary puck, and began to whistle."

" 'I say, Turkey,' said Sawtelle, stumbling and blushing."

Saturday Evening Post—Sept. 12, 1925, "Mud," by Frank Condon.

"He slammed the door as he departed, strode down the walk in a bad frame of mind—"

"Rivers To Cross," by Roland Pertwee.

"The little man stiffened like a ramrod at the sight of me."

"He then appointed himself by the fireplace and shuffled his feet and seemed to be waiting for something which I was at difficulty to provide."

Woman's Home Companion, May 1926, "Seven Years," by Sylvia Stevenson.

"Gay sat perched on top of the steps, dangling silver-grey silken legs that tapered to the slimmest ankles."

Scribner's, April 1925, "Tropical Heat And White Men," by Isa Urquhart Glenn.

"It was too hot to do any active thinking. The stout man, his feet upheld by clever sinks in the long arms of his chair, chewed the cud of tropical queerness."

"The Senora, also, had stretched out her legs, thereby displaying bare ankles built on heroic lines. Her figure had seemed to melt, and spread out, until the chair was filled up with it."

"The stout man twisted uneasily in his chair."

Prize Stories, 1921—"Grit," by Tristram Tupper.

"And he would remain silent, drooping there, wrists crossed in his lap, palms turned upward, fingers curled, until supper had been placed before him on the table."

GLANCE

Saturday Evening Post, Sept. 12, 1925. "Prince Sarrazin's Frogs," by Edgar Jepson.

"Anne Calhoun's eyes opened wide."

"Rivers To Cross," by Roland Pertwee.

"Torn this way and that, he stared at me."

"For a long while he looked at me. There was something queerly naïve in his expression."

Woman's Home Companion—May 1926, "With Banners Blowing," by Barry Benefield.

"And he went slowly round the house to the front gate, looking back several times and smiling shyly, his dimple dancing in his cheek."

"Her Son's Wife," by Dorothy Canfield.

"She looked up at the opening door, a terrible expression of hysteric fear on her face."

GESTURE

Saturday Evening Post, Sept. 12, 1925. "Prince Sarrazin's Frogs," by Edgar Jepson.

"She clasped her hands with an air of gentle enthusiasm."

"He twirled his mustache as he came."

"Mud," by Frank Condon.

"Mr. Tucker bowed toward Shorty, who saluted and mumbled."

"Rivers To Cross," by Roland Pertwee.

"Eagerness came into his face, his fingers twitched nervously, then fastened around the letters."

"There was a pause in which Sir Francis drummed his fingers upon the table."

"Presently, as though it were acting independently of instructions from headquarters, his right hand jerked out toward me."

Woman's Home Companion—May 1926, "With Banners Blowing," by Barry Benefield.

"Carrie's hands stopped working and sank into her lap. She looked up at the sky, passed one hand nervously over her forehead, and shook her head vigorously."

"Her Son's Wife," by Dorothy Canfield.

"But the feverish child, fretful and weary, pushed the little glass tube away petulantly."

"The child clutched at her arm with fingers as stiff as bird-claws."

Golden Book, "Beauty's Sister," by Owen Johnson.

"Sawtelle shut his lips, struck a valiant blow at an imaginary puck, and began to whistle."

TONE OF VOICE

Golden Book, "Beauty's Sister," by Owen Johnson.

"Beauty, murmuring an inaudible reply,—"

Saturday Evening Post, Sept. 12, 1925—"Prince Sarrazin's Frogs," by Edgar Jepson.

"Anne Calhoun's eyes opened wide; and in the hushed voice of immense astonishment she said,—"

"Mr. Bosanquet gave his mustache another twirl and in an even more lordly voice said—"

"In accents both dulcet and honeyed Miss Timmins said,—"

"Mud," by Frank Condon.

"Shorty grunted his annoyance."

" 'Now that we know each other,' he said pleasantly with the easy confidence of a New Yorker in another city."

"Mr. Tucker bowed toward Shorty, who saluted and mumbled."

" 'And not only that,' said Mr. Tucker in his confident booming voice."

" 'That's what I've been arguing,' snorted Gil."

" 'Which shows,' chuckled the famous comedian, 'that nobody knows anything.' "

"Rivers To Cross," by Roland Pertwee.

" 'Damnable!' he ejaculated in a voice as hard as a pebble."

" 'I am wondering,' he said in a voice crisp as a sheet of ice."

Scribner's, April 1925, "Jonesy Gets His Swim," by Edwin Cole Dickinson.

" 'I—I got held up, sir,' he stammered, at last."

LAUGH

Saturday Evening Post—Sept. 12, 1925, "Mud," by Frank Condon.

" 'Which shows,' chuckled the famous comedian—"

"Rivers To Cross," by Roland Pertwee.

"'Care to?' I took his hand with an awkward laugh."

Hearst's International—Nov. 1924, "The Painted Veil," by W. Somerset Maugham.

"He gave her a little smile as she looked at him."

Prize Stories of 1921, "Fifty-Two Weeks For Florette," by Eliz. Alexander Heermann.

"Margarita laughed. She laughed so hard that Freddy had joined her, and without knowing how, he was by her side, holding on to her hand while they both rocked with merriment. When they could laugh no more he snuggled up to the shoulder that smelled so nice."

"The Tribute," by Harry Anable Kniffin.

"A hearty laugh escaped the artist."

"At last he laughed delightedly and clapped his hands."

"Aurore," by Ethel Watts Mumford.

"She laughed. It was the first time that Crossman had heard her laugh—a deep, slow, far-away sound, more like an eerie echo."

GAIT

Golden Book, "Beauty's Sister," by Owen Johnson.

"Beauty gulping down something that rose in his throat, started aimlessly to skirt the edge of the pond."

Saturday Evening Post, Sept. 12, 1925.

"Prince Sarrazin's Frogs," by Edgar Jepson.

"At ten o'clock the next morning he came into the shop with a lordly air,—"

"Mud," by Frank Condon.

"He slammed the door as he departed, strode down the walk in a bad frame of mind—"

Woman's Home Companion—May 1926, "With Banners Blowing," by Barry Benefield.

"And he went slowly around the house to the front gate."

Lest any confusion arise in your mind that the masterly use of the devises to which I call your attention in this lecture constitute all there is to characterization, I want to impress upon you emphatically at this point that in so doing you are only scratching the surface of the real problem of characterization of your actors, which consists of showing the traits of character which make up the personality of the actor. The next lecture will deal with that. For the moment I want you to concentrate all your attention upon the two surface phases:

1. Visual Impression of an actor's first appearance upon the stage—Static.
2. Following up and emphasizing of first visual impression by subtle actions as the actor responds to various stimuli.

In applying this knowledge to your knowledge of Scene structure, you will do well to remember that, as a general rule, the first visual impression will be presented in the first two steps of the scene, the Meeting and the Purpose. The subtle actions will be rendered in the third step of the scene, the Interchange. Of course, this is a very general guide.

It is highly important that you remember that by his *static appearance* an actor is IDENTIFIED. By his *subtle actions* he is INDIVIDUALIZED. Only when the actions or speech of an actor give evidence of clearly marked TRAITS OF CHARACTER is there real CHARACTERIZATION. That will be dealt with separately in the next Lecture.

Problem 14

CHARACTERIZATION OF ACTORS

The writer of a Short-Story, like the writer of any kind of fiction, must assume many rôles. He must be an observer. He must be an artist. He must be, scientifically, a structural architect, and he must be a casting-director; that is to say, he must choose for the parts in his play people or actors suited to carry out those parts.

In proportion as you can make your readers feel that the actors in your story are interesting and plausible will you be a successful craftsman. In fiction which endures, it is the actors' responses which make the plot possible, because all plots hinge upon the arranged responses of actors. Between life and fiction the chief difference lies in this arrangement of the happenings. In life, the happenings which involve a special actor or set of actors, show the character of the actor or the actors; but they may do so quite without connection and without interdependence. In fiction, there is a connection and an interdependence between the happenings and the characters of the people, and this connection and interdependence makes up narrative and dramatic interest and a plot pattern.

Your function, as a fiction writer, is to observe people in action responding to various stimuli, and to interpret those responses so that you will be able to determine the motives which lie behind the responses; then, as a writer, you must record those actions in an interesting and plausible manner which gives the illusion of authenticity. In order to achieve authenticity you must be aware of the qualities which are necessary to good characterization. To be successful in de-

veloping all the possibilities which lie in your actors, you must show those actors responding to stimuli in such a way as to disclose *character traits,* because it is by their character traits that you differentiate people. One man who sees a crippled dog and binds up its paw is a different person from another man who seeing that crippled dog aims a kick at it. Reduced to its lowest terms, then, characterization in the modern short-story is the pictorial presentation of the responses of actors in such a way as to display character traits.

As you develop your capacity for deductive observation you become more and more expert in interpreting the responses of any actor in terms of character traits. It is this gift of seeing below the surface that distinguishes the competent literary observer from the common run of humanity. Everybody, as I pointed out to you before, is aware of the same happenings; but the fiction writer, because he possesses this ability to see below the surface, causes other people to turn to him for enlightenment. Having observed humanity over a definite period of time he discovers that certain urges are more or less present in all human beings. In some people they are subordinate, never rising to the surface; in others they are pronounced. In some civilizations, generations of training and environment have superimposed character traits upon a whole social class, or even upon a whole people. Certain races are known to other races to be niggardly, or thrifty, or polite, or warm-hearted, or arrogant, or boastful, or pugnacious, or cowardly, or evasive, or courageous, or tenacious, or hard-headed, or impulsive, as the case may be.

Standards of conduct vary with racial and social groups; but, within these racial and social groups there is always a norm. As the conduct of any individual within the group varies from this norm, such an individual ceases to be typical of his group and becomes differentiated from that group. Civilization tends toward standardization, and standardization tends toward submerging the individual and developing the type. Type traits obscure individual traits, because conduct does not always indicate character. For this reason, the

interpretation of character is difficult to a person who is not a trained observer.

The more primitive the society the more easily is conduct interpreted, because there are fewer artificially imposed inhibitions which cause the actor to conceal the motive behind his response. On the other hand, the more complex the society, the more difficult is the task of the interpreter, because from a mass of confusing and misleading conduct responses he must isolate the real motive which is the characteristic inspiring the response.

In observing people, the important thing for you to remember, as a writer, is that the action itself—the response—is not always a true indication of the trait inspiring the response. For example, it is not sufficient to show a man allowing another man to win a competition when he could have won that competition himself. The important thing to make clear to the reader is the reason why the first man acted in this way. If his reason for so responding was that he wished his opponent to have a sense of superiority in order that he might sell him some goods while in this glow of satisfaction, he is displaying a very different trait of character from that which he would be displaying if his motive was to help restore his opponent's self-respect. Therefore, what really determines the character of a person is the reaction of that person to a stimulus in terms of both motive and the considered action.

Two people doing the very same thing—that is, responding to the very same stimulus in the very same way—may do so from very different motives. One man, for example, on being told that another man has said something unkind about him may say "well, that's his privilege," and he may mean it. Another man may say "well, that's his privilege," but the motive behind it may be to conceal rather than to express his actual reaction to the stimulus. For this reason it is important that in your stories you shall indicate clearly to your readers the motive behind every response of your characters whenever the response itself does not clearly indicate the trait. It is the motive which determines the character trait; yet,

indicating the motive alone means nothing unless the statement made by you is accompanied by the presentation of the action to which that motive gives rise. This is because, as a story writer, you are concerned primarily with the sensory impression and the pictorial presentation of drama, having in mind always that the person who reads your story is not interested so much in the fact that something happened *as in seeing that thing happening.*

A statement by the author that Bill Jones is an honest man is merely analysis of the responses of Bill Jones, appealing to the intellect of the reader. This analysis causes no impression because there is no sense appeal, and without an appeal to the senses there can be no impression, unless the reader himself supplies it by projecting his own imagination. This is too much of a burden to put upon the reader, because you are in competition with other writers who do not place upon him this burden. But, if you *show* Bill Jones finding some money which he might, without fear of discovery, divert to his own use, and show him restoring it to its owner you have *dramatized* Bill Jones's honesty. When I say you have dramatized it I mean you have presented it exactly as if you were recording what was happening upon a stage. Your attitude towards your material ought to be that of Shakespeare, who said "All the world's a stage."

In order, then, that you may understand clearly and thoroughly the problem facing you in observing and presenting character, it is well to pause for a moment to see how a knowledge of craftsmanship will simplify your problem. First and foremost, the basic unit of all story structure is the happening. This happening may be introduced by you for any one of the different purposes of the artist:

1. To give an impression of the setting, which may be time and place, or it may be, in addition, the social atmosphere.
2. To give an impression of the appearance of the people, so that you will not be writing about ghosts.

3. To show that a certain crisis or turning point has been reached in the narrative pattern.

What you are immediately interested in, however, is the sort of happening which displays character by showing the motive behind the action, and also the actual expression in terms of sensory appeals of this character trait. You are interested in conduct and character, which are not by any means always the same thing. While it is a comparatively simple matter to show a number of happenings which indicate a character trait, it is not always so easy to find a single happening which besides showing the action will also show the motive behind that action, or as is sometimes the case, the conflict of motives which results finally in the action itself. If your observation is sufficiently keen and extensive you can sometimes do this; but ordinarily you will be compelled to fall back upon a separate rendering of motive and of the considered action, particularly where that considered action is the outcome of a conflict of motives.

Because you are concentrating now upon *characterizing* your actors, your first impulse will be to disregard the necessity for pictorial presentation of the action in attempting to render for your readers the motive or motives which result in that final action. In doing so you will fall back upon the easiest method, which is that of analysis. This tendency toward analysis is to be guarded against, for it is likely to result in an overdoing of the analysis, so that the pictorial presentation of the actors in action is neglected. On the other hand, in your desire to portray the character trait through action you may disregard entirely the significance of that action by neglecting to show your reader the motive dictating the action. Fortunately, there is open to you a middle course. It is to show the action pictorially, interpolating only such analysis of the motive as will not slow up the action. Here are the first twenty-two lines of "The Haunted Lady," by Adela Rogers St. John, which will indicate to you very clearly what I have in mind:

"The man looked up, startled by the muffled crash of glass shattering upon the exquisite blendings of a Bokhara prayer-rug. It was a very small crash, yet it echoed in the warm intimacy of that charming, book-lined room. It spoke so inevitably of some shameful, violent, secret thing—some unheard-of, shameful thing that had no right to be there.

"The man's eyes—fine, clear, gray eyes that were just a little stern—rested upon his wife for a moment, and then went back to the pages of his book. He simply could not sit and stare at her, because she had obviously forgotten him and it couldn't be fair to violate her privacy like that."

You will notice here that the pattern, which I told you will go through all stories, is apparent. There is a happening. The woman has dropped a glass. That is the stimulus. The response of the actor is to look up and allow his eyes to rest upon his wife for a moment. There is an impression of the actor—a man with fine, clear, gray eyes, just a little stern but, if we were to stop at the words "rested upon his wife for a moment, and then went back to the pages of his book," we would have that pattern of stimulus, impression of the actor and actor response, but we would not have any *characterization* through showing a trait of character. Now observe what the competent artist does. Mrs. St. John adds the words: "He simply could not sit and stare at her, because she had obviously forgotten him and it couldn't be fair to violate her privacy like that." Observe again lines 1385 to 1427 Gretchen says to Burke Innes "And you forgive me in spite of my telling the district attorney." And from the conversation which ensues we become aware definitely that the same character trait which was shown in the opening of this story is still evident in this man. On line 1422, he says "But, of course I could never have forgiven you for that—missing alibi. That was why I left last night. Because of course that was just a matter of clean sportsmanship."

Clean sportsmanship is the trait of character which lies behind all the actions of Burke Innes.

There will occur to you at once the question as to how you

are to discover what traits lie behind actions which do not indicate clearly those traits. Here, as always, observation is the source of your material. This observation may either be your own or the verification of the observation of others; but it will give you, whether personal or vicarious, an ever growing number of responses, each of which is definitely the outcome of some trait of character.

Differentiation of people in your stories is the task upon which you must spend the major portion of your time. A definite knowledge of what you are trying to do will speed up the process for you immeasurably. Here, as elsewhere, practice makes perfect. You need not be much of a psychologist to know that the man who upon entering a room where he sees and smells hyacinths in a bowl, smiles sadly in a reminiscent way, is a different sort of man from the one who looking at the hyacinths says, in a loud, irritated voice, "damned waste of money, flowers like that." Although circumstances will sometimes cause a person to react to a stimulus in a way which is not habitual, if you are a trained craftsman you will make clear to the reader that such a response is unusual. Your capacity to foretell any actor's reactions accurately will be uncertain until you have acquired that *insight into character* which comes from the properly directed observation which enables you to recognize behind the action the hidden springs of character that dictate that action. It is essential to your complete understanding of the problem of characterization, which is really the problem of differentiating the actors in your story, that you realize that any person's character is merely the sum of his character traits.

John Galsworthy makes a very trenchant comment which might well serve as a guide for all writers interested in the observation and translation of character. In talking about one of his characters in the Forsythe Saga, he says, "Behind conduct lies the main trend of character." Your first duty to your reader, then, is to show or present pictorially the *conduct* of your character. Yet, this pictorial presentation

must inevitably lack authenticity until you make known the motive that dictates the action, or the conduct—what Mr. Galsworthy called the main trend of character, which is the sum of his most usually evident traits. If the actor in your story is, for example, stingy, his every action—everything which he does or says, and every thought he thinks, every emotion he feels, will be shaped by that trait and will express that trait, unless there is something in the circumstances which makes that trait subordinate to another, and then it will almost inevitably be necessary for you to indicate the struggle in his consciousness between the two traits of character, one of which emerges dominant. Furthermore, any indulgence of a trait will strengthen and confirm that trait into a habit, so that more and more often the conduct of a person will be the expression of a special trait, which becomes through habit what we call a dominant or central trait of character.

It might be well to say a word or two here as to the dangers of a wrong emphasis on what is known as the dominant trait. Many reputable teachers of the short-story have taught that a character should have in a story only a single trait. Much confusion has been caused by the misinterpretation of this dictum as meaning that the character should have that trait and that trait alone. On the contrary, this is not so. The stingy person may be also socially ambitious, and in the achievement of his social ambition may be called upon to spend large sums of money. He may also have, for example, an overweening fondness for a parasitic, spendthrift relative. He may be very vain and susceptible to flattery. His social ambitions, his desire to retain the love of his parasitic relative and his hunger for flattery may be eternally at war with his stinginess. The purpose of the story writer is to show to the reader that although several traits may be in evidence in one person throughout the story, at any important crisis, particularly at the story's close, one of these is and must be dominant. In this way there is achieved the drama of character, because

drama is essentially conflict, and the conflict is between the different traits which strive to become dominant.

The proponents of the dominant trait method of story writing maintain that in the story which is mainly action, there is room in the space at the writer's disposal for the portrayal of only this dominant trait. The acceptance of such a doctrine would lead to a classification wherein stories deal primarily with only one of the component parts to the practical exclusion of the others, giving the emphasis in one story to character traits, in another to turning points or complication of plot, in a third to atmosphere or setting, and in a fourth to theme or propaganda. This is a mistake which probably had its inception in Stevenson's classification. Yet, Stevenson did not make this error. He was very careful to point out that his classification was merely in regard to a starting point, and that a story might have its source in character, plot or setting; but he was most careful to point out that he conceived all his stories to *combine* characterization, plot and setting in practically equal proportions. It is the uncritical acceptance of this doctrine of definite classification which allows the production of stories which will never have any claim to more than momentary interest, and very little to that.

The more you study stories, and the more you study life, which is the basis for all stories, the more you will realize that every story is and must be a story of character. There can be no story until there is character. What would cause one person to be very angry would leave another person unmoved. What would cause one person to try to move Heaven and Earth in accomplishment would leave the other person absolutely cold. Therefore, there can be no story until a character reacts to a stimulus. If you are a true artist you will realize this. You will know that your readers are interested in a story not so much because of the solution of the problem, but in the solution of that problem by a certain person. Thus it is that while many people have no recollection of the plot of Conan Doyle's detective stories, scarcely a

reader of them will have forgotten the outstanding figure of Sherlock Holmes. Therefore, you may say that many traits may be indicated in an actor in the space of a short-story; but the requirements of unity and the space limitations will determine just how much emphasis can be placed upon any one; at every crisis, however, the action of the character—that is, his response at that moment, will show the reader that temporarily one trait is dominant. The more traits any character can be made to display the more completely will the reader know that person. What you desire to show in your stories are characters, not merely figure heads or dummies from department store windows. The insistence upon a single dominant trait dominant throughout can mean only the portrayal of figureheads, and at best, of types.

Your greatest single advance in the mastery of characterization will come at the moment when you grasp the fact that the expression of character through conduct is really the pictorial presentation of a *reaction dictated by a trait.* For example, a rich man, entering a restaurant, orders baked beans because they are cheaper although he does not like them. No human being can react to any stimulus or perform any single action, no matter how subtle, without to some extent revealing his character to a properly qualified observer. The unassailable fact remains that in the modern short-story, depending as it does upon pictorial presentation, characterization and action must be inseparably linked. Faced by this requirement of pictorial presentation you will learn one important principle of craftsmanship from the dramatist, who, in portraying his characters is denied entirely the advantages of analysis and must depend for his effects upon action alone. Yet, the consummate craftsman, working in the medium of the stage or of the drama, limited only to action, can accomplish much. There are, in the final analysis, only a certain number of ways in which a writer may make clear to his readers just how a character responds to any stimulus, no matter what that stimulus may be.

1. There is the change in appearance or expression of the

actor. For example: His face lighted up with a smile. His cheeks became suffused with crimson. He turned so pale as to seem almost bloodless.

2. His subtle or pantomimic action: He raised his hand as if to shield himself. He dashed his hand roughly across his tear-dimmed eyes. He signaled peremptorily to the waiter. He closed his eyes wearily.

3. His violent or obvious responses: He flung the letter across the room. He swung the axe with all his might. He hurled himself upon his heavier opponent.

4. His words by which he expresses his thoughts and feelings: "I've a good mind to hand you over to the police." "You are a fool to go on slaving for a worthless brother." "I won't give you a cent more than five hundred." "I loathe the sight of him." "If I could serve her I would be the happiest man alive." "I feel suffocated." "Go ahead and arrest me."

The fifth method of making the actor's responses clear to the reader in such a way as to show the traits of his character is denied the dramatist. It is: The analysis of the actor's thoughts or feeling. For example: "He was torn between his desire to help Wilfred to escape and his feeling that the girl must be considered." Half aloud, he said "I've a good mind to hand you over to the police." His first impulse was to run, but the futility of such a course made itself apparent at once. In jail, at any rate, he reflected, he would be safe from attack. He turned to the policeman, almost smilingly, "go ahead and arrest me," he said.

His original design of helping his cousin out of his financial dilemma was swept away by his instinct for bargaining. He had intended to offer him a thousand dollars for the picture. He could get that back from the dealer easily, he felt certain; but at his cousin's hesitating mention of six or seven hundred dollars his mouth hardened and he said decisively, "I won't give you a cent more than five hundred dollars."

The problem will come up at once as to which is the better method of presenting character: In the words of the author

or in the words of the actor. You can say at once that wherever the actor can characterize himself, or even characterize another actor by his speech or actions it is better to allow him to do so, because in that way you are showing or dramatizing characters, whereas in the words of the author you are only analyzing; and analysis is an appeal to the intellect whereas action is an appeal to sight, and therefore, to the senses.

The mark of the first-rate short-story writer is that although he always recognizes the dual requirements of motive and expression of conduct in action, he indulges in analysis only when he cannot achieve his results through pictorial presentation. Wherever possible he *shows* the happenings, interposing only such explanatory comments as are essential to give an impression of the actor or to indicate that the conduct has to be explained. The important thing to learn is that the characterizing details which cannot be dramatized are only a very small proportion of the material used. The simplest way to insure the use of only good material in short-story writing, as in everything else, is to have at your disposal a vast storehouse of available subject matter. This you will acquire as a result of observation. During the process of this observation you are not so much an artist as a scientist, evolving laws of conduct for each person observed; attempting to isolate traits of character where they are not quite clear from the conduct, and checking up always by continued observation of conduct the expression in action of such traits.

In the assignments of traits of character to the actors in your story you must, of course, be consistent. A man may be honest, just and indolent, but he cannot be shown throughout your story as indolent and suddenly solve the main problem by vigorous, dynamic action. You cannot, while you are being honest with your reader, change a character's trait merely to suit the turn of the plot of your story. You must remember also that the person who is honest, just and indolent, for example, may react to any stimulus in any one of those three ways: By an action showing honesty, or justice, or

indolence. Between the moment he becomes aware of the stimulus and the moment that his final act is made apparent to the reader he may be torn between the demands of these different traits in his character; but his final action inevitably will be the pictorial presentation of one of those traits. That is how things happen in life. You must be true to life. You must give the impression of reality. Do not confuse this with being merely accurate. You would not have a college professor, for example, talk in the diction of a janitor, or vice versa. It would not be convincing. Several people have protested when I have called this consideration to their attention and have retorted, with every belief that the retort was crushing, "But I know just such a man." Those people have been confusing truth with accuracy, assuming that truth is fact. Truth is not fact. On the contrary it is the relation of one fact to another, or to all other facts.

In the portrayal of character you owe it to your characters, to your readers, and above all, to your own artistic conscience, to see things clearly and to see them whole. Here more than anywhere else your problem is fundamentally to find and portray the truth. The recording of your observation is dependent entirely upon the completeness of your observation.

Your chief problem is to differentiate people, and to do this as soon as possible in your story. Here, for example, is how Ben Ames Williams does it in a story called "Aside After Lucre," reprinted from the *Saturday Evening Post* of December 4, 1926:

"The two young men were friends, and this not so much in spite of the difference between them as because of it. If they had been of equal capacities and powers, there must have been rivalry, there might have been jealousy, and there could hardly have been such a union of spirit as did, in fact, exist. They had come together at Technology, Charlie Trevett from a town in northern New York state, and Hugh Manley from down in Maine. The class room introduced them to each other; their acquaintance developed into liking,

and in their final year at Tech they roomed together amicably.

"Trevett had a brilliant and audacious mind; he had a way of leaping over intermediate obstacles to the solution of a difficulty. Manley, on the other hand, was a plodder. Give them the same problem to do, and Manley attacked it with sober diligence, covering many sheets of paper with complicated computations, thinking with a lead pencil, seeking no short cuts, but trying every road in turn. Trevett, under the same circumstances, was more likely to light his pipe, stroll about the room, glance into a novel, read the evening paper, fill his pipe again, and finally fling himself down at the desk to seize pencil and pad and rip the heart out of the matter in half a dozen lightning calculations. He usually finished the task before the slower man, and he was more apt to be right than Manley too. At their graduation he ranked fifth in his class, while Manley was hopelessly down in the ruck, floundering along among those who passed but failed of any distinction.

"Trevett was not inflated by his eminence. 'It doesn't mean anything,' he used to say. 'It isn't the figures the professors set down in their little books; it's the figure on your pay check ten years from now that counts.' "

"But Manley was immensely proud of this friend of his. 'Charlie has a brilliant mind,' he pointed out. 'He has genius in him; he can leap over a difficulty that takes me hours to pass. Yes, sir, Charlie will be a big man in ten years' time. At the top of the profession.' "

"Trevett used to laugh at him for this, and he used to say kind things about Manley—things obviously kind. 'I don't see that you've flunked any courses yourself,' he reminded the other man. 'Chances are, in ten years I'll be coming to you for a job.' "

I want you now to turn to John P. Marquand's story "Once and Always," (Case No. 8 in the Case Book), to show you how cleverly he achieves this differentiation. At Agamemnon, Maine, three men descend from the train. The response of Gideon Higsbee, line 95 is to sum them up as crooks. In

this way he shows that he is a shrewd judge of character. On the other hand, Lemuel Gower shows by his response, line 108, his gullibility. Here you have clearly differentiated by their responses to the same stimulus—which is the appearance of the men—two distinctly opposite traits of character.

One of the most effective ways of showing character is to allow the reader to see how the actor affects other people. For example, in a story called "The Lopstick," by Samuel Scoville, Jr., which appeared in the April, 1926 number of the *Red Book,* this is what the readers learn: "Rex Nennis was a prime favorite with both of the dogs. Nodu showed the tip of his pink tongue in a wide smile, and came as near to wagging his tail as a North Greenland dog ever does, and the husky failed to growl when he came near, a great outburst of affection for one of his own dour race."

In a story called "Peter's Pan," by H. G. Witwer, which appeared in the *Cosmopolitan* for November, 1926, here is what we find:

> "There came into my office a thick-necked, broad shouldered gentleman bearing all the earmarks of a pugilist—that is to say, both his ears closely resembled Brussels sprouts. His nose gave me the impression that he had made an insulting remark to Jack Dempsey on a vacant lot at midnight. Several poorly healed scars added nothing to the beauty of his scowling countenance; in short, here was no Apollo, gentle reader.
>
> Stimulus { "My ill-visaged visitor regarded the comely stenographers with unfeigned admiration and
>
> Reaction { they shuddered, the rattle of the typewriters at once becoming a furious din.
>
> "He executed what he probably intended to be an affable grin and almost caused a panic among the more timid of the girls."

Certain things will become apparent at once. You cannot fail to realize that character consists in dramatizing and presenting to your reader traits of character, together with the actions which grow out of those traits or which display those traits. In looking about you for material for characterization you will add to the *impression* of your character, which is purely intended to give an image upon which the reader may superimpose the traits, *evidences* of character traits. For example, you might in your note book make such notations as this:

"Unselfishness

An unmarried mother gives up her child, whom she loves dearly, to be adopted into a good family because she believes it is for the good of the child."

or

"An older brother stays at home to work on the farm in order that his younger brother may go to college, when he, above all, desires a college education."

or

"A wife gives up her plan of buying a new dress in order that she may buy a Christmas present for her husband."

or

"A girl has an inviting offer to go to the city in a position for which she has long been looking, but she decides to stay at home and look after her invalid mother."

or

"A poor woman who has saved up her money to buy a much needed dress, used it instead to buy her daughter a new dress to wear at a party."

or

"Two men were pals in the army, one married, one single. The married man was detailed for a dangerous mission, whereupon the other man arranged to go in his place."

If you had made such notations you would be able to do two things. You might wish to establish this trait of character in the same way that Ben Ames Williams established the character of his actors. In that case you might make a topic statement, "He was an unselfish man." You would then list evidences of his unselfishness. You might wish to make a contrast between this unselfish person and a selfish person by showing the reaction of both to the same stimulus.

You might then, for example take the response showing unselfishness now appearing as "A wife gives up her plan of buying a new dress in order that she may buy a Christmas present, for her husband," changing the rôles of husband and wife, to carry out the topic statement that "*he* was an unselfish *man.*

The stimulus to which they are both to respond is the receipt of a letter from some relative which says "I am sending each of you a twenty dollar check to do with as you please." The response of the unselfish one would be to determine to buy the Christmas present for the other. The response of the selfish one would be to determine to secure the other's twenty dollars to add to his own in order to buy something for himself.

If you wished to make a scene you could change the material slightly so that the unselfish person had determined to divert the twenty dollars toward helping a third person. Then the selfish one could try to persuade the unselfish one to let him have the money for self-indulgence, liquor, perhaps. The unselfish one would naturally protest, and the clash would occur. The scene purpose would be that of the selfish person. The outcome would be a question of choice with you as artist.

Characterization consists in showing that the actions of the actors spring from definite and clearly apparent *traits of character.* The more clearly opposed you show the traits of two people in a scene, the easier it will be for the reader to differentiate them, and the more likely the scene is to be dramatically interesting.

Flat Characters and Round Characters

Whenever you select a trait of character and show your actor behaving consistently in such a way as to indicate that trait, you have a *flat* character. He is equivalent to the actors in "Pilgrim's Progress." He is Mr. Goodman or Mr. Badman. There are no variants of his responses. He is always good or he is always bad. When such a character appears he is a *flat* character. A *flat* character is all you need for minor rôles. A butler needs only to be dignified and polite and imperturbable to be a type butler. But if he is to have a better and more important part, he must be, in addition to a butler, a human being. He may be a villain, in which case he is a *villainous butler* or if you prefer, a *buttling villain.* But even so he is still a *flat* character. *A flat character* is a *single characteristic shown in conduct.*

If on the other hand, this villainous butler is at soul an artist, and can be held and softened by strains of music or by a glorious sunset, or by a beautiful painting, he begins to be a *round character.* If in addition to these traits, he is loyal to a certain person, and would do almost anything in the world to keep that person from knowing that he is a villain, he is to an even greater extent a *round character.* A *round character* is a *number of conflicting characteristic traits shown in action or indicated in thought or reflection.* In the *flat character* there is expressed a single motive or trait. In the *round character* many conflicting motives and traits are expressed.

In the short-story, the most you can hope to do is to make one or two *round* characters, the chief actor and the chief opponent. Sometimes it will be only the chief actor. In many cases none of the actors will be *round characters.* In fact, very few of our story writers today possess this capacity for rendering *round* characters. As soon as they do they almost invariably switch into the field of the novel or the play. For the present you may say that if you can succeed in presenting even *flat* characters, consistently, you will have no difficulty in writing good, saleable stories.

Problem 15

THE BEGINNING—ITS PLOTTING—ITS PRESENTATION

"I keep six honest serving men
(They taught me all I know);
Their names are What, and Why and When,
And How, and Where and Who."

Kipling.

Your problem in regard to the Beginning, like your problem in all other parts of your story, will be immensely simplified if you will keep clear in your mind the distinction between plotting and presentation. The plotting consists of the selection and arranging of the different elements; the presentation consists in placing the product before your reader, the actual writing. In the organization of the Beginning of your story you will be guided by your knowledge of the Laws of Interest. You know the purpose of the Beginning is to *capture* the reader's interest, and you know further that there can be no narrative-interest until the reader is aware of something to be accomplished or something to be decided. Only then is there a narrative situation. Your primary concern then, in presenting the Beginning of your story is to set forth convincingly and interestingly the main narrative situation confronting the main character. The reader is aware of a narrative-situation as soon as he knows that there is something to be accomplished by a character, or that a character is confronted by a problem demanding for its solution a decision on his part. It is the mark of the well-constructed and well-presented Beginning that the reading of it will cause the reader to phrase for himself a *main narrative question.* In the story of accomplishment this main narrative-question will

be phrased "Can . . . (the main character) succeed in . . . (the feat to be accomplished?). In the story of decision this main narrative-question will be phrased "What action will—(the main character) take at this crisis?" This phrasing will be on the part of the reader not of the writer.

To permit a reader to phrase either of these questions, there are, therefore, two elements you must have in every Beginning: a main character and a main story situation. In plotting the Beginning of your story, consequently, you will ask and answer certain questions, of which the first two are "Who is the main character?" and "What does the narrative-situation call upon him to accomplish or decide?" Upon the correct answering of the first question: "Who is the main character?" depends the clarification of the story in your own mind. In the Beginning of the story of accomplishment the main character is the person who is shown as about to essay some task. In the Body of the story of accomplishment, the main character is the person who is trying to accomplish his feat, despite the opposition of forces either passively or actively hostile. For the hero of the short-story may take as his text, "He that is not with me is against me!" In the Ending of the story of accomplishment the main character is the one whose attempts to accomplish his feat are shown by a conclusive act, (either his own or one brought about by him), to be definitely successful or unsuccessful.

The function of the Beginning in the story of accomplishment is to make clear to the reader which character is called upon to accomplish something.

The function of the Beginning in the story of decision is to make clear to the reader which character is called upon to make a decision between a choice of conducts.

It will be less confusing to consider each type—accomplishment and decision—separately. Let us take first the ten stories of accomplishment in the Case Book.

(a) In the account of the Adventure of Ulysses with the Cyclops, (see Case No. 1 in Cases in Craftsmanship)

Ulysses, who sets out to escape from the clutches of the Cyclops, is the main character.

(b) In "The Cop and the Anthem" (See Case No. 2 in Cases in Craftsmanship), Soapy, who sets out to ensure himself ninety days on Blackwell's Island, is the main character.

(c) In "Spare Parts" (See Case No. 3 in Cases in Craftsmanship) Monte English, who sets out to drive a Vindex from Los Angeles, California to St. Louis, Missouri, is the main character.

(d) In "The Escape of Mr. Trimm" (See Case No. 4 in Cases in Craftsmanship) Hobart W. Trimm, who has to escape from his handcuffs, is the main character.

(e) In "Jake Bolton 551" (See Case No. 5 in Cases in Craftsmanship) Jake Bolton, who has to make good in the army, is the main character.

(f) In "Sunk" (See Case No. 6 in Cases in Craftsmanship), Jason Terwilliger, who has to kill Jake Finch, is the main character.

(g) In "Paradise Island" (See Case No. 7 in Cases in Craftsmanship) Dwyer, who has to kill Langley, is the main character.

(h) In "Once and Always" (See Case No. 8 in Cases in Craftsmanship) Gideon Higsbee, who has to restore $10,000, to Lemuel Gower, is the main character.

(i) In "The Face in the Window" (See Case No. 9 in Cases in Craftsmanship) Cora McBride who sets out to capture Hop Ruggam, is the main character.

(j) In "Western Stuff" (See Case No. 10 in Cases in Craftsmanship) Verena Dayson, who has to regain her husband from Violet Lennay, is the main Character.

In the story of accomplishment it is not always necessary that the main character be aware of what he has to accomplish. He may or may not be aware of this end. Ulysses, Soapy, Monte English, Hobart Trimm, Jason Terwilliger, Dwyer, Gideon Higsbee, Cora McBride, and Verena Dayson

all know what they are to accomplish. Jake Bolton, on the other hand, is not aware of any definite purpose. *But the reader is in all cases.* In the story of accomplishment this clarification of the Story situation in your own mind is essential, because it will enable you to concentrate every effort toward presenting it to your reader, and thus avoid digression.

The answering of the second question, "What does the main situation call upon the main character to accomplish?" helps the clarification of your story, first in your own mind and eventually in that of the reader. It will help *you* by focusing your attention upon a definite narrative purpose actuating the chief actor, throughout. This purpose will project the attempts of the main character to overcome opposing forces which will make up the Body of your story. In the story of accomplishment, particularly, as soon as you know what is to be accomplished, you can examine the results of the interchanges in the Body of your story (the fifth or Plot step of each scene) to determine whether or not they are crises which indicate plainly to the reader narrative turning points which are either furtherances or hindrances of the main narrative-question raised by the main situation. Knowing definitely the narrative purpose of the chief actor will help *the reader* by concentrating his attention equally and immediately upon the hero and the thing to be accomplished. Correct planning of your Beginning will help both you and your reader to phrase a main narrative-question for your story.

(a) "Can Ulysses succeed in *escaping from the Cyclops?*"
(b) "Can Soapy succeed in *getting six months on the Island?*"
(c) "Can Monte English succeed in *driving the Vindex from Los Angeles, California, to St. Louis, Missouri?*"
(d) "Can Mr. Trimm succeed in *escaping from his handcuffs?*"
(e) "Can Jake Bolton succeed in *making good in the army?*"
(f) "Can Jason Terwilliger succeed in *killing Jake Finch?*"
(g) "Can Dwyer succeed in *killing Langley?*"

(h) "Can Gideon Higsbee succeed in *returning* $10,000 *to Lemuel Gower?*"

(i) "Can Cora McBride succeed in *capturing Hap Ruggam?*"

(j) "Can Verena Dayson succeed in *regaining her husband?*"

A chief actor and a Story Purpose you must have; because there can be no Story narrative-interest until the reader can phrase a Story narrative-question; and, obviously, he cannot phrase a narrative-question until he is aware of something to be accomplished or something to be decided. Yet, in a man who wants to cross a street you have something to be accomplished; and in a woman who cannot decide whether to eat a hard-centered chocolate or a cream-centered one you have something to be decided. Clearly, neither of these, as it stands, makes an *interesting situation.* So, you will see that out of the answer to the first two questions grows the third question: "Why is the Story Purpose interesting?"

The reader, as I pointed out in discussing the Laws of Interest, may know who the main character is; he may know that a certain crisis has arisen in the life of that character, whereby he is confronted by the necessity for, or has determined upon a course of action; so that the feat to be accomplished (the Story Purpose) is obvious; but his interest will grow in proportion to the *importance* or the *unusualness* of that situation. A situation is *important* when the crisis is one which marks a great turning point in any life. When a young civilian joins the army in time of war it is an important turning point, because the whole course of his life changes. But, although the situation is important, it is not unusual, because several million young men came at the same time to the same turning point. On the other hand, when any young woman begins to consider capturing single-handed an escaped murderer she has come to a turning-point in her career both unusual and important. When a man deliberately determines to kill an unknown man for money he is in a situation that is

both unusual and important. But when a young man determines to drive a car from Los Angeles, California to St. Louis, Missouri, the situation is in itself neither important nor unusual. It is made interesting by the author because he makes it important and unusual through *making much depend upon it* and by adding conditions not ordinarily imposed by such a trip. The situation is made important by the addition of elements which tend to make the thing to be accomplished not commonplace but important. There are certain stipulations made: a time-limit is placed upon the accomplishment; the winning of a girl is involved. It is clear, then, that a situation to be interesting must be either important or unusual, and that a situation which is in itself both important and unusual is better material than the situation possessing only one of these claims to interest.

Before you can hope to master plotting, therefore, you must make the distinction between the situation which is intrinsically important or unusual and the situation which is synthetically important or unusual. That is why you must be clear in your own mind as to the answer to the question "Why is the main situation interesting?" Your main situation may be either *intrinsically* interesting or *synthetically* interesting; that is to say, it is an interesting situation *in itself,* or *it depends for its interest upon its involvements.* Out of the ten situations which I have used as instances, nine are *intrinsically* interesting, the fifth is built up, or *synthetically* interesting:

1. Ulysses	Intrinsically	interesting	because	important	and	unusual.
2. Cop and the Anthem	"	"	"	"	"	"
3. Escape of Mr. Trimm	"	"	"	"	"	"
4. Jake Bolton, 551	"	"	"	important		
5. Sunk	"	"	"	important	"	unusual.
6. Paradise Island	"	"	"	important	"	unusual.
7. Once and Always	"	"	"	peace of mind depends upon success.		
8. The Face In The Window	"	"	"	important and unusual.		
9. Western Stuff	"	"	"	important; but not unusual		
10. Spare Parts	Synthetically	"	because of involvements.			

From an examination of these situations you will see that your answer to the question "Why is the situation interesting?" will vary with every story.

This demand for interest you must keep in mind throughout your story, from beginning to end, but particularly in the Beginning. It is the Beginning of the story which captures the reader's attention; it is the Beginning which determines for the reader—and this includes the professional "reader" in the editor's office—whether or not he will continue to read the story.

If you know the function of the different sub-divisions of the Beginning, the likelihood of your interesting the reader is materially increased; because you can devote yourself to the artistic presentation of your material, unhampered by uncertainty as to whether or not your efforts are well-directed. You will *know* what you are trying to do. As in working out the main plot of your story you kept in mind the main divisions of Beginning, Body, and Ending, in determining whether or not you have included in the skeleton pattern or the plot outline of your Beginning everything that you should have, a knowledge of the component parts of the Beginning will help you.

The Beginning, you will remember, has two subdivisions: the Story Purpose and the explanatory matter. The three questions so far have concerned themselves with clarifying that part of the Beginning which deals with the Story or Plot Purpose. Yet, the Story Purpose is not the whole of the Beginning; there is another subdivision consisting of the explanatory matter necessary to the reader's understanding of the Condition or State of Affairs which causes the Chief Actor to respond in terms that project a purpose on his part that gives the plot its unity. It is through the inclusion of explanatory matter in the Beginning of your story that you convey to the reader any unusual or important involvements of the main situation not inherent in the main situation itself. These involvements will consist of factors in the Setting, the characters, or the circumstances which indicate to the reader

that conflict or interchange will almost certainly arise, growing out of the main purpose of the chief actor. In that portion of the Beginning which contains the Explanatory matter you will point out that before the main purpose can be accomplished, the chief actor must first engage in conflicts to (a) overcome difficulties, (b) overcome opposing forces, (c) avert disaster. Sometimes this probability of conflict to overcome a difficulty, or an opposing force, or to avert disaster lies in some condition of Setting or Environment; an African jungle, for example, or a fever-ridden swamp; or a stretch of No Man's Land during a bombardment present difficulties not present in the ordinary city street, or country road, or ball-room floor; sometimes it lies within the character. Some character trait in the main character at variance with his main purpose (weakness, moral or physical, obstinacy, vanity, sensitiveness), threatens his success in accomplishing his purpose. It may be that the probable appearance of some formidable opposing character will place obstacles in the way of and threaten disaster to the main character's success. Sometimes this foreshadowing of conflicts to be engaged in before success is possible is disaster looming ahead, and lies in the conditions or restrictions under which the feat must be accomplished; the necessity for speed, the payment of some penalty, or the loss of some reward; in short, in those circumstances which are neither environment nor character.

If you will glance at the Case Book you will find that in "The Adventure of Ulysses" with the Cyclops the conditions in the environment make the accomplishment of Ulysses extremely difficult. The brutality of his host, the host's great strength, and his apparent determination to make an end of Ulysses and his followers all promise a conflict with an extremely dangerous opponent, and foreshadow a moment somewhere in the story when disaster is certain to be very imminent.

In "The Cop and the Anthem" the thing to be accomplished is in itself so unusual that it gives the whole flavor to the story, so that the conflicts do not have to be particularly

foreshadowed. They almost automatically grow out of the strangeness of the purpose.

In "Spare Parts," on the other hand, the probabilities of conflict with obstacles is emphasized from the opening right up to the first struggle of the Body of the story. The difficulties lying in such an attempt as Monte is called upon to make are told about, the opposition in the person of Kerry is made quite apparent to the reader, and the combination of these possibilities makes it plain that in view of the fact that the girl has agreed to marry the other man, disaster is certain to loom very close in case Monte does not succeed in his purpose.

In "The Escape of Mr. Trimm" the difficulties in the condition are quite obvious. It is also plain that everybody whom Mr. Trimm meets is likely to be a force in opposition to his purpose, and it is made clear further that there is a certain urgency about the accomplishment of this purpose which foreshadows a moment when disaster will become almost inevitable in case success is not soon achieved.

In "Jake Bolton, 551" the difficulty in the environment is pointed out by the lieutenant to the captain when he tells him that "getting a bad name is sufficient to ruin a man's whole career in the army." When he points out also that there is a formidable opposing force in the persons of English officers, the way is foreshadowed for the moment of disaster which is bound to come when the main character, Jake Bolton, has met and been overcome by those officers.

In "Sunk" Jeffery Terwilliger is quite careful to point out to Jason Terwilliger that there are difficulties lying in his way in the killing of Jake Finch. He also makes plain to him that Jake Finch is a strong man, a powerful man; and the situation itself, that is, the purpose to kill a man, is sufficiently important to make plain to the reader that its failure is bound to result in disaster.

In "Paradise Island" the same conditions exist. Dwyer has to wipe out a man who stands in his way. The great contributing factor in the explanatory matter of this story is the disaster which is certain to arise for Dwyer should he not

succeed completely in his purpose. He will be a ruined man, and all of his plans will have tumbled down about his ears.

In "Once and Always" there are difficulties lying in the way of restoring the money to Lemuel Gower in the fact that Lemuel is likely to resent this attempt and to refuse the money. Lemuel is also a more or less stubborn person, and in this way becomes a threat of opposition to the purpose. It is also made clear that old Gideon Higsbee will not be happy until he has restored the money, and it is also made plain that there is an urgency about the success of this purpose, because of the imminence of death for the main character before he can complete his task.

In "The Face in the Window" the difficulties pointed out are that the girl is not a very strong girl, because of hardships she has been forced to undergo. There is a snow-covered waste to be passed before she can even reach the spot where she is likely to meet the murderer. That the man himself, Hap Ruggam, is a formidable opponent is quite apparent. That disaster is sure to wait upon failure of this purpose is evident, because Hap Ruggam is a murderer who has never hesitated to kill and will not hesitate to kill to keep himself from being recaptured.

In "Western Stuff" the difficulties lying in the way of this rodeo queen are quite obvious. She knows nothing whatsoever about tackling such a situation as confronts her. That she has a formidable rival in Mrs. Sennay there is no question; and that disaster is likely to arise is evident, because she points out that although men grow sick of Mrs. Dayson in a week or so, there are several days still to go before that time limit expires. That disaster will be sure to ensue in case of failure is also clear, because it is quite plain that Verena Dayson is very much in love with her husband and wants him back.

Your plot will grow and take form as you answer clearly the questions: How is difficulty, conflict or disaster likely to arise? The value to you of answering these questions is that if you find that this important element of foreshadowed con-

flict to overcome a difficulty, to overcome a dangerous opponent, or to avert disaster has been omitted *you can supply it.* If it is not inherent in the main situation *you can invent it.* Now you will see the value of a knowledge of the Laws of Interest, which show you that a narrative situation is interesting and important in proportion to what depends upon it. This is not the only gain. By clearly indicating the probable appearance of difficulties to be overcome and of hostile forces to be worsted, you also concentrate your reader's attention so that he begins to look forward to an interesting encounter; and once you have captured your reader's interest in the Beginning by adding this element of *expectancy* your chances of clinching that interest in the Body of your story are increased tremendously.

It becomes more and more evident, you see, as you attempt to clarify any main situation (that is to say, the main purpose of the chief actor) and its explanatory matter, that it is the crisis of the situation in which you are interested, for the reason that ordinarily it is when it has reached its crisis that it becomes most important. Then, certainly, it becomes most intense. For this reason, answering the question "When does the main situation reach its crisis?" is particularly useful in helping you to get your story under way. A crisis means a turning point. A main situation reaches its crisis when the reader, being aware of the thing to be accomplished and of the involvements of difficulty, conflict or disaster, becomes conscious that the main actor can no longer delay action, or has determined of his own accord to embark upon a course of action. This will mean that the Beginning of the Story is over.

From then on, the reader having been enticed by the promises you have held out to him of struggles between the actor and other actors and forces opposed to his Story Purpose, expects to see those promises fulfilled. In short, the promises of conflict which come as Plot Crises or fifth steps of presentation units in the Beginning are the seeds of *complete dramatic scenes* in the Body.

The reader learns certain things.

First, he learns that a Condition or State of Affairs exists.

Second he learns that the Actor has qualifications, and that other actors or forces have other qualifications.

Finally he learns that the Actor has a Story Purpose, growing out of that Condition or State of Affairs, that promises lively conflict or encounters.

When he knows all this, the crisis is apparent.

In "The Adventure of Ulysses" with the Cyclop, this crisis is apparent when it is *evident to the reader* that Ulysses, realizing that the Cyclop is a menace to the safety of his group, determines that he will escape. There is an interesting variant here, because the Cyclop anticipates the attempt of Ulysses; and the first attempt of the Body of the Story is an attempt of an opposing force which precipitates a new condition, more threatening and sinister than before. The crisis is really reached just before line 212. It is not until line 226 that Ulysses "of whose strength and cunning the Cyclop seems to have had as little heed as of an infant's," makes his first attempt in the Body of the story.

In "The Cop and the Anthem" the crisis is reached when Soapy (See line 87) "having decided to go to the Island, at once set about accomplishing his desires."

In "Spare Parts" the crisis is reached on line 593, when "Monte threw up his job; he knew that he would have to when she first asked him."

In "Jake Bolton, 551" the crisis is reached when on line 95 we learn "Lieutenant Townsend's prophecy was soon justified."

In "The Escape of Mr. Trimm," the crisis is reached on line 1021. "Mr. Trimm read the account through to the end, and as he read, the sense of dominant, masterful self-control came back to him in waves."

In "Sunk" the crisis is reached on line 162, when Jason Terwilliger says "I will go," and is amplified up to line 179, which ends "and our mouths shut."

In "Paradise Island" the crisis is apparent in the very first paragraph. "Dwyer halted at the ditch, abruptly, as though an invisible hand had seized his arm. An idea rang in his brain; this would be the place to kill a man."

In "Once and Always" the crisis is apparent on line 64, where Gideon Higsbee realizes that the only way he can quiet his conscience is by reimbursing Lemuel Gower and restoring to him the $10,000.

In "The Face in the Window" the crisis is evident on line 609, where it says "Cora McBride, alone by her table in the kitchen that night, made her decision." This crisis is further amplified and made pictorial up to line 659, where the reader learns that "she went out through the shed door, closing it softly behind her." The reader then knows that nothing can delay her attempts to remove the different obstacles that stand in the way of her capturing Hap Ruggam.

In "Western Stuff" the crisis comes at the moment, on line 119, that the reader learns that Verena has agreed with Mr. Dark to set about winning back her husband by the tried and true methods which he places before her: to outdress, outcharm, and outflirt the other woman.

The Story Situation of any story of Accomplishment reaches its crisis when it becomes apparent to the reader that the chief actor is actuated by a single Story Purpose. It may be presented, as in "Paradise Island" before the reader knows the Condition or State of Affairs which has led the chief actor to become so actuated. In that case it will be PRESENTED out of its chronological order. The reader, to be made aware of the Condition projecting the Story Purpose must be flashed-back in time. The Presentation is Flash back instead of Chronological. The order becomes Story Purpose, followed by CONDITION or Explanatory Matter. The Chronological Order is CONDITION, followed by STORY PURPOSE. In the chronologically presented story all the information is in the hands of the reader before he becomes aware of the Story Purpose. From then on, everything is Body. He is interested in whether or not the Chief Actor will be successful in

his Main Purpose, and because he knows the probable forces the actor will encounter, he is anticipating *definite encounters* to be presented as *dramatic scenes.*

When the Story Purpose precedes the Explanatory Matter, setting forth the Condition which precipitated it, the reader cannot anticipate *definite encounters,* because he does not know the forces to be opposed to the Chief Actor. The author is therefore compelled to flash-back in time in order to place this information before the reader. There is a gain in the Flash-back Sequence, because the reader knows how important the Condition is, when he reads it, because he already knows that important Story Purpose that has been precipitated by it. Later we shall go into this more fully.

Just now we are considering the process of Planning the Beginning rather than the process of Presenting it.

Perhaps the most useful of all the questions which you will ask yourself in plotting the Beginning of your story of accomplishment is the sixth, and last: "Where is the action of the Beginning laid?" It goes without saying, that the fewer changes of location there are in a story the more unity that story will possess, because the fewer will be the distractions of the reader. Much is dependent, of course, upon the amount of explanatory matter which is necessary to the understanding of the main purpose of the main character—that is, of the main narrative-situation for the whole story. For the sake of unity, however, change of location will be avoided wherever possible.

An examination of the Beginnings of the ten stories in the Case Book, which are stories of accomplishment, will disclose much that is worth your consideration. Here is what we find:

In "The Adventure of Ulysses," the action of the Beginning is all laid in the cave of the Cyclops.

In "The Cop and the Anthem" the action of the Beginning is all laid in the square wherein is located the bench upon which Soapy sits.

Neither of these stories needs much explanatory matter.

They are either important or unusual enough in themselves so that action can immediately spring out of the situation.

In "Spare Parts," however, the opposite is true. The situation itself is not important or unusual, and therefore, has to be led up to through a series of interchanges. In general, however, the action is laid in and about Los Angeles. Virtually the same is true of THE ESCAPE OF MR. TRIMM. There is much which must be made clear and explained to the reader. For this reason the scene changes from the courthouse in New York to the train, and finally to the countryside along the right of way.

In "Jake Bolton, 551" the scene is laid in the recruiting office.

In "Sunk" the scene is laid in the library of Jeffery Terwilliger.

In "Paradise Island," which is a flash-back Beginning, the scene is laid in the office of Dwyer, and in the approach to Dwyer's house, and again, for a short time, in the house where Dwyer meets his wife.

In "Once and Always" there are four changes of scene—there is the scene in the doctor's office, the scene in the office of Mr. Higsbee, the scene in Mr. Higsbee's house, and the scene in Agamemnon, Maine.

In "The Face in the Window," there are in the Beginning two changes of scene—the scene in the newspaper office when the news of the escape is first received, and the scene in the home of Cora McBride. This may be said, if necessary, to be two scenes, one in the bedroom and one in the kitchen, making three scenes in all. The scene in the postoffice does not belong in the Beginning, it is the sequel to the whole story.

In "Western Stuff" the scene changes once. There is the scene in the hotel room and there is the scene in the newspaper office where Mr. Blivens gives the assignment to Mr. Dark.

With these six questions asked and answered, your task in respect to the Beginning is out of the realm of plotting, and into that of presentation. It is thereafter a question of render-

ing your materials, of combining them in such a way that the reader's interest will be captured to the extent that he will wish to know the answer to the problem you have raised in his mind, the narrative-question you have caused him to ask. He will also be looking forward to the conflict you have foreshadowed.

In all stories of accomplishment the Beginning will fall into two clearly defined classes: the first class is that in which the main purpose of the main actor, together with the importance or unusualness which makes it interesting, can be presented to the reader in a single interchange between two people, whether that interchange be an episode, an encounter, or a scene, either episodic or dramatic. "Sunk" is in this class. So is "Jake Bolton, 551."

In the second class of stories of accomplishment are those Beginnings in which the importance or unusualness of the situation cannot be made apparent to the reader in a single interchange. "Spare Parts" and "The Escape of Mr. Trimm" are in this class. It is necessary that the reader be told about prior interchanges before he is able to go on in an understanding way with the Body of the story; that is, with the conflict between the character and opposing forces which make up the Body of the story. Usually these prior interchanges are not in themselves very interesting when merely told about. The inexpert writer presents this second type of Beginning in two ways—both of them are dull. In one, he summarizes what has taken place by indicating that certain interchanges have occurred which result in a series of minor crises. The cumulative effect of these minor crises is to project the major crisis, or the main narrative question of the story. He presents these in their order chronologically.

The other way in which the inexpert writer presents a story dully is to collect the most important, or the major crisis of the story, and present it at once, and then to summarize, out of chronological order, the result of the previous interchanges in a series of minor crises. In both cases he presents summary. In one case the summary precedes the main situation chrono-

logically; in the second case the summary follows the main situation anti-chronologically, or in flash-back.

With this second type of Beginning I shall deal in a later lecture. At the present time I wish to point out to you just how a writer is led into errors because of his lack of the understanding of fundamentals of craftsmanship.

In the case in which the writer presents his story chronologically by offering to the reader first a summary of the minor crises which lead up to the major one, his instinct is sound because he realizes that this major situation is the most important; it gives to the story as a whole its narrative unity. For this reason the more quickly the reader learns about it the more quickly he will become interested in the outcome. Yet, it may be a case of cutting off one's nose to spite one's face to give a lot of summary before this is reached, because summary is dull.

Yet the writer seems torn between the devil and the deep sea, because he understands that the main situation depends upon the reader's knowledge of these minor crises for its interest. Opening his story, therefore, he hurries over these crises which are the result of interchanges and condenses the interchanges in his eagerness to reach the main situation, merely indicating the existence of these crises as the result of interchanges. But the mere indication or listing of crises is a part of plotting, whereas in *writing* the Beginning you are concerned with *presentation.* It is when you come to the actual presentation of your Beginning that you will understand the advantage of having plotted that beginning before attempting to write it. You will have clarified in your mind the main situation and its explanatory matter: a fundamentally important thing when you realize that you must introduce at the earliest possible moment the main narrative question of the story.

If you take the obvious way, which is to present the main situation first and then to flash back to the minor crises, you may be able to overcome the obstacle which lies in your way, provided you do not fall into summary afterwards. But there

are types of situations, of which "Spare Parts" and "The Escape of Mr. Trimm" are examples, in which a great deal must be presented to the reader before the main situation can be laid before him, since the explanatory matter lends the importance to the Story situation. Although in the Story situation there is something to be accomplished, that situation presented at once could not be made the starting point of your Beginning. Either it is not one readily acceptable and common enough to contain all its implications without explanatory matter, or it is not important enough so that it will in itself hold the reader's attention. In the one case the reader's mind, or intellect, would be forever presenting a threshold of resistance to the interest of your story; in the other case the reader would not be sufficiently curious to care whether or not the actor succeeded in what seemed to him a trivial purpose; he would turn instead to other narrative problems which were more interesting in other stories presented to him simultaneously. Remember always that most stories are read in magazines, and that there are anywhere from five to eight other stories to which the reader may turn if yours does not at once seize his interest.

This is why a study of the two stories, "Spare Parts" and "The Escape of Mr. Trimm," is so interesting. They show you that competent writers almost invariably present interchanges in order to place before the reader the explanatory matter necessary for the reader's understanding of the main situation. Interchanges are always more interesting than the straight word of the author in summary.

The reason that you introduce a main purpose for your main character is to give a narrative unity and a narrative interest to your *story*. Narrative interest comes, as you will remember, from your study of the construction of a scene, from the knowledge on the part of the reader of the purpose of a character. If you studied that very carefully you have learned by now that there is a main purpose actuating the character throughout the story, and an immediate purpose actuating the character in every scene. That is why so much

stress is put upon your ability to construct scenes and to present scenes. It doesn't matter particularly whether these scenes are dramatic or episodic as far as narrative interest is concerned. Narrative interest comes from purpose. When you add clash you add drama, and make of an episodic a dramatic scene. The basic principle of especial interest to you now is that *whenever you present the purpose of a character you have achieved narrative interest.*

If in writing your beginning you cannot at once introduce your main narrative question, be sure not to go very far in your story without introducing a scene narrative question. In that way you will achieve narrative interest.

If you do not introduce narrative interest, you must substitute another kind of interest, which is dramatic interest. If you do not introduce a purpose for your character; if there is much explanatory matter, you must be sure that the interchanges are dramatic—that is to say, they must be encounters. You will find, however, that it is very difficult to present a prolonged encounter without some purpose on the part of one of the actors becoming apparent.

Dramatic interest is very desirable, but the most important interest is, from the point of view of capturing attention, narrative interest.

Your story, you must never forget, is not being considered by the reader as something he *must* read. It is pleading its cause against many others; it is only one voice in a chorus of voices, all clamoring for the attention of the reader. If the reader is not soon made aware of a narrative question by his knowledge of some purpose actuating an actor in your story he is quite likely to abandon the story without ever knowing that the main narrative question which comes later in the story is exceedingly interesting and would have held his interest. This will mean nothing if his interest is not captured by your presentation of the involvements, from which the situation gathers its importance. Yet, you, as author, know that in order that he shall become aware of the importance of the main situation he must first be made aware of the involvements

leading up to and complementing it. It is only through the fact of this major situation being the outcome of certain cumulative minor crises which preceded it in time, that it has become the important major situation or purpose upon which the story hinges.

It is in the writing or presentation of this type of Beginning that writers fail most frequently. In the manuscripts of aspiring authors dullness is apparent; the writer knows what he is trying to do. He is striving to reach as quickly as possible that Story Purpose. But his readers lose their interest before that point. This is the rock upon which the hopes of so many promising geniuses are wrecked. So far can they go and no farther. The reader simply says: "too long getting under way—not interested, thank you!" and occasionally he omits the "thank you." "Too long getting under way, not interested" has been and still is the decision against which so many aspiring writers have gone down to defeat. Your instinct when you realize that your Beginning takes too long to present its Story Purpose is to condense the explanatory material, reducing it to a mere skeleton outline. But in doing this you are taking the wrong path. *You should have expanded.* Outline, as I said before, is concerned with plot, whereas the problem you are facing is solely a problem of presentation, not a problem of space.

The chief reason that so many writers fail to make the Beginning of their stories interesting to their readers is that they substitute *narration* for *pictorial presentation.* Narration is simply an orderly recital of events. It is essentially panoramic. With the panoramic method the author merely says that certain things happened; it is the method of the historian and the newspaper reporter; the emphasis is on the *results of meetings.* With the pictorial method *the meetings themselves are shown happening,* the author interpolating such explanatory comments as he may think necessary. This pictorial presentation marks the great advance in treatment which is essentially modern and American. It accounts for the increasing length of the modern short-story. At its worst it

is bad because it creates an artificial interest through the pictorial presentation of material of no intrinsic interest. At its best it is superb artistry. It eliminates the dull spots of "explanatory matter" by presenting them pictorially. Because the Beginning of a story is naturally and of necessity made up largely of "explanatory matter" resulting in minor crises, it is in the Beginning that this pictorial presentation does its greatest service. Your success as a short-story writer cannot be more than haphazard until you grasp the fundamental truth that the Story Purpose is a Major Crisis of the Plot, and that every Plot Crisis is the result of an interchange between forces, and that such a Plot crisis is most effective when it is preceded by that interchange *pictorially presented.*

A knowledge of scene structure will here be of the greatest assistance to you. An interchange, you will remember, is the third step of a scene. It may be either an episode or an encounter. It is preferably an encounter, because you then have, besides pictorial rendering, dramatic quality in the clash.

There is, of course, another kind of drama which you may employ, and that is the story drama of the fifth or Plot Step which is the promise of difficulty, of conflict, or of disaster. You may present interchanges which are episodic, but which leave the reader at the close with hints of the main drama or main disaster of the story. You may also use one or two of the other kinds of interest; that is the interest of contrast, or the interest of the unusual, or the interest of the usual made unusual, but these are only subterfuges. They do not take the place of dramatic scenes.

In the Beginning, the crisis with which you are primarily concerned is the Story Purpose, and you will be successful in presenting that Story Purpose in proportion to the completeness with which you grasp the fundamental requirement that it shall be the result of *an interchange of forces, pictorially presented,* and preferably in dramatic scenes. Failure to recognize this essential advance in treatment comes largely from faulty teaching. Aspiring writers have been told to study foreign models, notably Maupassant.

Mrs. Katharine Fullerton Gerould, in a comprehensive article on The American Short-Story, states the case very well. Talking of Maupassant she says: "He gives you enough of the hero's or heroine's background or mood to make the initial gesture plausible. Beyond that there is no characterization. Fate does the rest. . . . Now, when an Englishman or an American tries to do this—usually he cannot. In spite of himself he begins to round out his character, explain his background, enrich his canvas. . . . The ideal short-story, from our point of view, is the one wherein interesting or dramatic things happen to clearly identified and differentiated people. . . . Since it (the Short-Story) must center in one *situation,* we need to be prepared perfectly for that situation,[1] but not for anything else."

You will notice that Mrs. Gerould insists that the reader be prepared perfectly for the Story Purpose. This perfect preparation concerns itself with the presentation of the explanatory matter leading to the main situation and designed merely to identify and differentiate the character. It calls for that knowledge of craftsmanship which is presentation, and which embraces the setting forth of episodes, encounters, or scenes. The factor determining your decision between these units will be the number of words needed to convey the explanatory matter. If in a paragraph of swiftly-moving, pictorially-presented incidents you can present enough to make the Story Purpose important to the reader, then incidents will suffice. But ordinarily, the explanatory matter calls for at least an episode. If such an episode exceeds more than four hundred words the reader's interest is likely to lapse. This is not always the case, of course, because there may be a quality in the phrasing, some charm of style, or an appeal to some special type of interest not in itself strictly narrative. It is

[1] Mrs. Gerould used the word "incident." To avoid confusion of nomenclature I have changed it in the quotation to read "situation," because she meant not "incident" as I use it (the single act of a single force) but a combination of "incidents" into a "situation," (Something to be accomplished or decided).

unwise to depend upon such a possibility; unwise because it is a poor utilization of your resources. Such special methods of attracting the reader are outside of narrative craftsmanship; they should be additional ornaments to technique, not a gloss to cover up lacks.

One of the first tendencies you will have to avoid is toward the use of the essay-like or philosophical opening, designed to bring out the significance of the story. The impulse dictating its use is good, because it shows a desire to get to the heart of your story, but it possesses dangers. The interest of significance belongs primarily not in the Beginning of a story but in the Ending. By placing it at the Beginning you sacrifice the opportunity of surprising your reader at the Ending through the use of the unexpected. You also admit that the story needs this sort of advertisement, that it cannot stand on its own feet. But it is undesirable chiefly because it defeats its own purpose. Every word of essay-like comment is extraneous. Instead of hastening the setting forth of the Story Purpose, it delays the moment when the reader becomes aware of the existence of something unusual or important to be accomplished or decided and becomes able to phrase for himself the main narrative question.

But if your purpose be, as Mrs. Gerould says, "to round out the character, to explain your background, to enrich your canvas," you will find this difficult to do in an episode of less than four hundred words. Yet, if you expand the episode so that you use more than that number of words, you will get more interest by adding clash to the episode, thereby making it an encounter. Still, this clash cannot be added without adding to the number of words; so that almost before you realize it your encounter will be perilously close to five hundred words, and the Story Purpose will still not have been stated.

For a number of years I conducted experiments with individuals and with groups to determine approximately the qualities in any story which captured their interest, but more particularly to discover what caused that boredom to which Mrs. Gerould says so aptly "there is no answer." I discovered that

people skip, first of all, passages of description; that next, they skip sections of character-analysis; and that the reason they skip is "to get on with the story." They will read a hundred or two words of description or character analysis in the opening of a story. But if in the first four hundred words a purpose, either for a scene or for the story as a whole does not emerge, they will not read further. When the main Story Purpose can emerge only after a number of minor crises have been presented, and then only after these crises have been preceded by interchanges pictorially presented, it becomes clear that this allowance of four hundred words will soon be used up in the pictorial presentation of any interchange which realizes the artist's desire to "round out his character, explain his background, enrich his canvas."

I pointed out to you, before, however, that the mark of a good craftsman is that he can develop every meeting into a scene, by preceding the encounter with a scene-situation or a scene-purpose, and following it with a scene-conclusive act. As soon as he introduces such a scene-purpose or scene-situation the reader is aware of a scene-narrative-question, because a narrative-question arises as soon as the reader is conscious of something to be accomplished. It is not a Story narrative-question. It is a minor, or scene narrative-question; but it captures the reader's narrative interest, an interest which is held in the encounter making up the body of the scene. It is through the incidents making up this scene-encounter that you are enabled to "round out the character, explain the background, and enrich the canvas," so that when the "interesting and dramatic things happen" they will meet Mrs. Gerould's requirements of happening to "clearly identified and differentiated people."

One thing will be, I think, quite clear to you by now: the decision as to how to present the Beginning of your story will lie ordinarily between episodes, encounters and scenes, or a combination of these. It will probably be a combination of all three. You will perhaps have an episode, an encounter and a scene, or perhaps two scenes and an encounter; or per-

haps an episode and two scenes. It is largely a question of individual choice. I am taking for granted, of course, that you have come to the conclusion that it is not possible to present all the information which should be laid before the reader for the Beginning of your story in a single scene. I am thinking now of that type of Beginning which needs more space than can be covered in a single scene, and in which the information must include interchanges which took place at different times and in different environments. The units you use, that is to say, scenes, episodes, encounters, will be largely a question of your individual choice.

The chief consideration is that you shall present to your reader as soon as possible the Time, the Place, and whatever Social Atmosphere you have in mind, the People involved, the Purpose of the main character, the implied Difficulties, the presence of Dangerous Opponents, the Indication of possible Disaster, and the ability or capacity or motive which is a necessary thing before we can understand whether or not it is possible for the main actor to bring about the end which he desires. You must also tell us how the main opponent, or any other opponents are equipped to defeat this purpose. You must make us feel that joy which Scott says "Warriors feel in foemen worthy of their steel." You will use whatever unit or units will most speedily bring the Story Purpose plausibly and interestingly to that point where the main character is about to make his first attempt to remove the obstacles lying in the way of the solution of his problem. To present your material so that the reader will phrase for himself a Story or Plot narrative question is, of course, the most important function of the Beginning. The sooner you do this the better; but if the explanatory matter is not presented you will have gained very little.

The materials that go into the Beginning are the Story Purpose, and Explanatory Matter, the narrative-question being the outgrowth of the Story Purpose as the reader sees it, the Explanatory Matter being made up of such setting as will give background and atmosphere, such biographical details of

the character as will help the reader to understand the significance of the Story Purpose as it confronts that particular character, and such prior happenings as are needed to clarify the Story Purpose and to indicate its importance. Upon the arrangement of these materials, their proportioning, depends the success of your story—your success in interesting your reader. It is axiomatic that if the reader knew *everything* about any one person he would be sure to find him interesting; in real life, the difficulty is that the interesting things are not on the surface, they are hidden beneath a mass of dull and uninteresting things. But in fiction you are unhampered; you can select and reject; you are not required to give all of a character's background, but only the *salient details necessary to illuminate the situation.* By learning to plot you learn to reject extraneous material. In considering the laws of Interest you found that, fundamentally, short-story interest is in the story itself, and that the mark of a short-story is that a character is shown confronted by a problem or in a dilemma from which he must extricate himself. You know, also, that *a thing is interesting in proportion to what depends upon it;* that no matter how interesting a character is through the mere fact of being himself a unique personality, he is still more interesting when he is shown confronted by a problem, or in a dilemma from which he must extricate himself. You know, besides, that the *Purpose itself,* the problem or the dilemma is always of interest, provided it is of importance or unusual. If it is, it alone would be sufficient to *capture* the reader's interest, even though it might not hold it. The Story Purpose, in fact, is essential to the story; by raising a Story narrative question it gives the story its unity. Therefore, it goes without saying that the Story Purpose should emerge at the earliest possible moment; first, because the narrative question is the core around which the short-story is built, and again, because the character becomes more interesting through being seen at an important or unusual crisis of his or her life, in a dilemma, confronted by a problem.

"But" the young and intense writer retorts, "what I am

especially interested in rendering is character and atmosphere. I don't want to be conscious of these mechanical devices." To this the answer is, simply "Then you don't want to be a short-story writer." If you are interested in a certain atmosphere you can render that atmosphere in a sketch or a travelogue, or a piece of descriptive prose or poetry, and you may succeed very well in rendering it so that the reader feels exactly the emotion which you wished him to feel; but you have not written a short-story. If you describe a character, analyze him, dissect him, you may make us see that character and feel his presence; but you have not written a short-story; without a narrative-question there is no story interest, whatever other interest there may be. If you cannot learn this, you cannot learn short-story writing. *The narrative question must come at the earliest possible moment.* That is the secret of the good opening, of the opening that *captures interest.* But those of you who say, "I am interested, primarily, in atmosphere, or in significance, or in character," need not be discouraged by this inflexible law of structure. The law does not say that the narrative-question must be introduced *at once,* but that it must be introduced *at the earliest possible moment.* You will be astonished to find that in any story the early introduction of the narrative-question, instead of diverting attention from the particular element in which you are primarily interested, really helps in the development of that element.

It stands to reason that if you can succeed in enlisting the reader's narrative attention by introducing a narrative purpose in the early paragraph of your story, your story has a better chance of being read than the story of another writer which opens slowly, *even though the Body and the Ending of the second story may be superior.* But the early introduction of the Story Narrative Purpose may be bald and hard to make plausible. In that case, you must do the next best thing. While preparing the reader plausibly for the main Story Purpose, you must hold his interest by the introduction of a Scene Narrative Purpose, or by the dramatic quality of the

material. Your whole problem in writing the Beginning of any story is to present at the earliest possible moment, in as interesting and plausible a manner as possible, the main narrative purpose of the whole story, against its explanatory background of character and setting or involving circumstances, doing so in such a way that a main narrative question is opened up for the reader, and that conflict is foreshadowed. That is the sole secret of a good Beginning. *The Unifying Story Purpose must be interestingly and plausibly introduced at the earliest possible moment.*

Three stories in the Case Book are extremely interesting for study in the light of the problem of presenting Beginnings in which the explanatory takes up a large proportion of the space devoted to the Beginning. They are "The Escape of Mr. Trimm," "Spare Parts," and "The Face in the Window." The first paragraph shows Mr. Trimm in the day coach with his plump white hands folded in his lap (line 19) held in a close and enforced companionship by a new and shiny pair of the latest model Little Giant handcuffs.

This is not a flash-back beginning in the strict sense. It does not open with the Story Purpose and then flash back to the explanatory crises leading up to that Story Purpose. It does, however, pick out an interesting and unusual point in the explanatory matter and present it at once. It also has a dramatic interest through presenting the promise of disaster. Then the author is able to take time to tell you about Mr. Trimm by showing the kind of man Mr. Trimm is through his reactions to various stimuli. Yet, it is interesting to see that very swiftly there is an interchange introduced between him and his lawyer, Walling, which is followed by the interchange between Mr. Trimm and the warden, Hallam, accompanied by Deputy Marshall Meyers. From then on the story is a series of interchanges throughout.

In "Spare Parts" the story opens with an interchange between Sally and Carson Kerry, who is the villain of the piece. It is a dramatic scene. Following this there are the meetings between her and Monte, in which the promise of disaster to

the love affair becomes apparent, when it is evident that Monte is poor and the girl is very rich, and that Monte is, besides being poor, very independent. From then on it is again a series of interchanges, presented chronologically.

Like "The Escape of Mr. Trimm," "The Face in the Window" is not a true flash-back beginning. There is first presented part of the sequel out of chronological order; and then there is presented the unusual and exciting series of events in the newspaper office, which are dramatic. Following this, the author is able to pause and give us the information about the main actor—or really actress. Then there is an interchange between Duncan and Cora, swiftly followed by the clash of traits in Cora McBride.

A study of short-stories will show you that the basic problem in plotting the Beginning is the problem of determining for yourself, before you begin to write, just what you propose to include in your beginning. In presenting that material which you decide upon, your problem is purely one of interchanges. Where you can present it in a single scene there is no problem at all; where you must present it chronologically and are required to give a good deal of information, then your problem becomes especially difficult. It is not, however, an impossible one, as you will see by a study of the stories I have indicated. The Beginning of the story, like the rest of the story, is concerned with Plot, with Settings, and with Characterization. The stating of the main narrative problem for the reader is all that need concern you in regard to Plot; that is the setting forth of the Story purpose so that the reader may find himself phrasing a main narrative question. This, of course, refers to the story of accomplishment. In the Beginning you must also give the background, and such impression of that background as you think is necessary or desirable, and that is Setting. In the Beginning you must also establish the characteristics of the actors which will make success or failure probable, and that is characterization. This characterization applies to the main character and to the main opponent. In Ulysses' adventure with the Cyclops you learn

at once that Ulysses is a man of resource, and a very good judge of character, because on line 52 you see that he conjectures that gifts would have more avail in extracting courtesy than strength would succeed in forcing it.

In "The Cop and the Anthem" you learn that Soapy is in the habit of spending his winters on the Island, and that he was aware of the various ways in which this might be brought about. You get an opinion as to the physical limitations of Mr. Trimm in the very first paragraph of Irvin Cobb's story when he talks about Mr. Trimm's plump white hands. You also learn that Mr. Trimm will stop at nothing to secure his own ends, even to the sacrifice of the lives of other people, as in the case of the young cashier.

In "Spare Parts" you learn about the reaction of the actors in the story by seeing Sally and Kerry in action, and later by seeing Monte and Kerry when Kerry tries to bribe Monte.

In "Jake Bolton" you are told that the recruit is good-humored; that he takes his place easily in the First Colonials; that the Captain and Lieutenant are impressed by him, and that he, except for his obstinacy, is the soul of courtesy.

In "Sunk" you learn that Jason Terwilliger, before the moment of the opening of this story, was a stronger man and more powerful than Jake Finch. You also learn that, being a Terwilliger, he is famous for keeping his promises intact.

In "Paradise Island" you learn in regard to Dwyer that he merely looks upon the other man as a comical mouse, and something standing in his way to be removed.

In "Once and Always" you learn that the basic trait of Gideon Higsbee is that he is able at once to size up people and tell the kind of people they are, because when the strangers get off the train he sees them at once as crooks, whereas Lemuel Gower sees them as very prominent bankers.

In "The Face in the Window" you learn that Cora McBride is the sort of person who was a little ahead of her generation and was afraid of nothing; that she was athletic and had the capacity which normally would enable her to accomplish her purpose.

In "Western Stuff" you learn that the main character is the best roper and rider of the world, approximately.

These capacities and characteristics are all planted in the Beginning of the story by the authors just as gardeners plant seeds in the garden, which are later to bear flower. The inexpert gardener very frequently plants weeds, or sees weeds come up where he had expected flowers. Just so the inexpert short-story writer sees wooden puppets emerge where he had expected characters, because he has not planted in the beginning of his story the traits or capacities which will bring about the ending of his story.

A word in closing in regard to explanatory matter in general is not amiss.

You can assume with safety that EXPLANATORY MATTER is of itself DULL. Yet, for plausibility it must be included. Without it the Story Purpose would not be convincing, or the struggles would not have any illusion of reality. So, it becomes evident that the supreme task of the story-writer is to PRESENT EXPLANATORY MATTER SO THAT IT WILL NOT SEEM DULL. He must disguise the explanatory matter, so that the reader does not consider it as Explanatory Matter.

The easiest way for you to acquire this ability is to learn to regard your material as composed of two parts, encounters and explanatory-matter. Encounters, you will remember, are the Bodies of Dramatic Scenes. In real life we call them "quarrels." When we say "there was a 'Scene' when her mother discovered it," we mean that there were "words between them." You will remember also that for every "encounter" there is a preceding "Condition." The "condition" projecting the encounter is the Explanatory Matter for the Scene. There is also the "Condition" for the whole story. It contains the Explanatory Matter for the whole Story, and projects *all* the encounters. We may compare the Whole Story to a Regiment of Infantry with its Regimental Headquarters; and the Scene to a Battalion (of which there are three in every Regiment) the Battalion having its own Battalion Headquarters. The Regimental Headquarters issues orders for all the strug-

gles. The Battalion Headquarters issues detailed orders for each particular Scene-struggle. It is obvious that the more detail comes from Regimental Headquarters (The Story Condition) the less detail will be necessary from Battalion Headquarters (The Scene Condition.) Also, the less detail of Explanatory Matter there is at the opening of each scene, the more swiftly the Struggles or encounters will proceed. If you concentrate the Explanatory Matter in the Beginning of your Whole Story, it will not clog the action of your scenes in the Body.

You will, if you are wise, include as much of the general explanatory matter as possible in the Beginning of your story, so that later the action of the different scenes will not be delayed by the explanatory matter and by the necessity of wading through it rather than being aware of the swiftness of the action. If, for example, you are to have a struggle between A and B, do not wait until B appears in the Body of your story to say that he is an opponent. Cause the promise of this opposition to be included in the Beginning. In that way you gain in two respects: first, the main story is made more interesting by the promise of conflict with a dangerous opponent, and, second, when that dangerous opponent appears he can at once begin his conflict with the main character without the reader having to be told just who he is and how dangerous he is.

In general the Beginning is used to prepare the way for the conflicts which are to come in the Body of the Story. The bulk of it is Explanatory Matter. It should be made up of interchanges. If at the end of the first interchange the main Story Purpose is not apparent, a dramatic crisis ought to be emphasized through the reader's becoming aware of the promise of difficulty, the promise of conflict with an opponent, or the promise of disaster to be averted.

The fifth step of the interchange (the effect upon the actors, or more definitely the effect transferred through the actors to the reader) should leave the reader *expectant*. If you have not promised him a struggle over a definite purpose, promise

him a struggle to overcome a difficulty, to overcome an opponent, or to avert disaster, *should certain indicated forces come together.* You will then in the Body of your story *bring those forces together.*

You can see from this that your chief task is to present explanatory matter without dullness; and that you must master the method of presenting your explanatory matter in interchanges, and preferably in interchanges developed into complete dramatic scenes. We shall go into this in more detail in the next problem.

Problem 16

THE BEGINNING

ITS PRESENTATION TO HOLD INTEREST ALREADY CAPTURED

"What we have, we'll hold; what we haven't got, we're after!"

Of all the faults which mark the manuscript of a writer who has not mastered craftsmanship; the one which is most pathetic is the one which comes not from complete lack of knowledge but from partial knowledge. In capturing and holding your reader's interest partial knowledge is often fatal. You know that the reader will not be interested if the incidents are not so arranged as to stimulate story-interest, which can come only through the presence of a central, unifying narrative-question, which comes from his knowledge of a Central Story Purpose. This purpose, you are aware, must be introduced at the earliest possible moment. A knowledge of this requirement marks your first step forward from the status of rank beginner. But in putting this knowledge into effect you run the grave risk of betraying yourself into the hands of your worst enemy—dullness. The instinct which causes you to do so is a sound one. It is a recognition of the principle that the function of the Beginning is to set forth the Main Story Purpose which grows out of the main condition confronting the character. It is perfectly logical and natural, therefore, in an attempt to capture the reader's interest at the outset, to begin your story at a point as far along as possible in the development of the main Situation which confronts the chief character. Your justification comes from

the knowledge that a thing is interesting in proportion to its importance; that is, in proportion to what depends upon it. The nearer to its crisis a Situation is, the more likely it is to have much depend upon it; for example, a man who is attempting to escape from six separate enemies is in a more exciting situation when all six close in upon him than he is upon the appearance of only one; and the man who has to raise five thousand dollars by May first is in a more exciting situation on April 30th than on March 30th.

Ironically, by beginning a story at a point far along in the development of the Situation, while you achieve Story narrative-interest at once, you frequently lose it almost immediately, through having to pause in your narrative to pick up the threads of the explanatory matter necessary to an understanding of the importance or unusualness of the Story Purpose. The reason is that while you realize that a Beginning consists of the Main Story Purpose and its necessary explanatory matter, you *dramatize* the Purpose; but you do not *dramatize* the explanatory matter. In your desire to "get on with the story" you *summarize* this explanatory matter. This is all very well in the sort of Beginning in which the main purpose can be presented with little if any explanatory matter because, by itself it is engaging; but in the sort of Beginning which calls for much explanatory matter before the Purpose can be found interesting, the proportion of summarized matter soon becomes too great.

You must, in order to do full justice to any portion of your task, keep before you always the requirements of the whole task; because the story is finally the sum of all its parts. You propose to show pictorially and dramatically a series of interchanges. These interchanges will be episodes, or encounters, episodic scenes, or dramatic scenes. If the meeting is an episode there is no clash. If the meeting is an encounter there is clash. If the meeting is an episodic scene the episode is preceded by a scene purpose which raises a scene narrative-question, and is followed by a scene conclusive act which answers that scene narrative-question. If the meeting is a dra-

matic scene the encounter is preceded by a scene purpose which raises a scene narrative-question, and is followed by a scene conclusive act which answers that scene narrative-question. For interest you will endeavor to have the interchanges take the form of dramatic scenes wherever possible, because by so doing you attain the interest of "clash" which is absent in the mere episode. In order to attain suspense which comes from uncertainty as to the outcome you will precede each interchange by a scene purpose, because only by having a purpose can you raise a narrative-question in the reader's mind.

In the different portions of a short-story, the interchanges have different functions. In that portion called the Beginning the function of the interchange is to present to the reader information through interchanges which will make clear to the reader the importance of the Story Purpose, this importance consisting of the promise of conflict to overcome a difficulty, the promise of conflict to overcome a dangerous opponent, and the promise of conflict to avert disaster. In the Beginning the fifth step of the interchanges cannot advance the main story through resulting in crises of Hindrance or Furtherance to the Story Purpose. Such crises can only appear after the actor has attempted to overcome his first obstacle. In the explanatory matter of the Beginning, the function of the Fifth Step of the interchanges is the *dramatic* strengthening of the Story Purpose. And the qualities of drama which occur in the Beginning, as you will remember from your study of the Laws of Interest, are those which lend importance to the Main Situation. (The Purpose or Problem.)

Assume for a moment that you have arranged in their chronological order a certain number of meetings, say eight. By the completion of the four necessary steps you have made, out of each of them, scenes. You may take as your point of departure any scene. You begin with Scene I, but you discover that such a beginning delays the introduction of your main Story Purpose. What is more natural, under such circumstances than to begin at a point further along chrono-

logically, where the Main Situation has reached a crisis projecting an immediate Story Purpose, say at the scene which is seventh in chronological order. The material contained in all the seven scenes is necessary to the understanding of the importance of the Main Story Purpose. Combined they make up the Beginning, consisting of the Main Story Purpose and its Explanatory Matter. However, if for the sake of speeding up the opening of your story, you open at Scene II, you must work in the material in Scene I before your Beginning is complete; and if you open with Scene VII, all the material in the six previous scenes must be presented before the Body of the Story Proper can be presented. How are you going to do this? Instinctively you will want to summarize, and if there is anything more deadening to the interest of a story than summary, I do not know what it is.

Almost invariably, I am compelled to mark on my beginning student's manuscripts, "Don't summarize—dramatize." By "summarizing," I mean that although you keep in mind the similarity of method between the writer and the dramatist, by *seeing* your stories in scenes, you will stop there and fail to *develop* them as scenes. Instead of treating the material pictorially and dramatically, you summarize it. You *tell* the reader that something has happened, instead of *showing it happening*. The difference is the difference between narration and dramatization, summary being a type—and a very dull and uninteresting type—of narration. Narration is simply the orderly recital of happenings, the bare outline, making no pictures, giving no background, conveying no impression, contributing little toward characterization. Just as soon, however, as you begin to enrich the outline by filling in the pictorial details of the meeting, you have, instead of narration, pictorial rendering which is the first enlivening step toward dramatization. The reader ceases being aware that a story is being told to him; instead, he sees the story unfolding before his eyes.

In order to comprehend the difference between summary and pictorial presentation, it is necessary only to know the differ-

ence in meaning between the verbs "say" and "show." In summarizing you are merely "saying" when you ought to be "showing." This tendency to summarize as being the easiest way out is a very common one. As great a man as Thackeray was conscious of it; but because he was a great man, he strove to overcome it. Side by side, here are the original and the revised draft of an episode from "Vanity Fair." Thackeray felt, apparently, that the original was slow moving and lacking in pictorial detail; so he changed it. It is an extremely interesting example of the difference between pictorial presentation and the usual instinctive summary. The great artist realizes that he must show *characters in action;* he cannot merely *summarize* their actions:

ORIGINAL DRAFT
SUMMARY

The next day Amelia received a note from him, which the girls opened, trembling, together; for they thought it contained the long-looked for dedication— But it contained only the following:—

Dear Amelia: I leave today for Cheltenham. Pray excuse me, if you can, to the amiable Miss Sharp, for my conduct at Vauxhall, and entreat her to pardon and forget every word that I may have uttered when excited by that fatal supper As soon as I have recovered (for my health is very much shaken) I shall go to Scotland for some months, and am

Truly Yrs.
JOSEPH SEDLEY.

And so ended Miss Rebecca Sharp's first campaign in life. It was a defeat, but it was honorable to the vanquished. She found that it was very necessary to keep her engagements with Sir Pitt Crawley; and so parted from her dear,

REVISED MANUSCRIPT
DRAMATIZATION

The next day, HOWEVER, AS THE TWO YOUNG LADIES SAT ON THE SOFA, PRETENDING TO WORK, OR TO WRITE LETTERS, OR TO READ NOVELS, SAMBO CAME INTO THE ROOM WITH HIS USUAL ENGAGING GRIN, WITH A PACKET UNDER HIS ARM, AND A NOTE ON A TRAY.

"NOTE FROM MR. JOS., MISS," SAYS SAMBO.

HOW AMELIA TREMBLED AS SHE OPENED IT.

SO IT RAN:—

Dear Amelia:—I SEND YOU THE "ORPHAN OF THE FOREST." I WAS TOO ILL TO COME YESTERDAY. I leave town today for Cheltenham. Pray excuse me, if you can, to the amiable Miss Sharp, for my conduct at Vauxhall, and entreat her to pardon and forget every word I may have uttered when excited by that

dear Amelia who she vowed she would love for ever and ever and ever.

fatal supper. As soon as I have recovered, for my health is very much shaken, I shall go to Scotland for some months, and am,

Truly Yrs.
JOSEPH SEDLEY.

IT WAS THE DEATH WARRANT. ALL WAS OVER. AMELIA DID NOT DARE TO LOOK AT REBECCA'S PALE FACE AND BURNING EYES, BUT SHE DROPPED THE LETTER INTO HER FRIEND'S LAP; AND GOT UP, AND WENT UPSTAIRS TO HER ROOM, AND CRIED HER LITTLE HEART OUT.

The changes made by Thackeray appear in capitals. It is very illuminating to see that when a writer makes one improvement, he almost invariably makes others. In the original the conclusion of the summarized incidents forms a *narrative* hindrance in the plot by being a *defeat*. In the revised version besides the *narrative* quality of the hindrance as a mere defeat, Thackeray emphasizes the *dramatic* quality of that defeat as well by indicating that it is sheer *disaster*. In the revised version *the moment is made much more important.*

The problem you face in avoiding summary loses half its difficulty when you realize how comparatively simple it is to change, as Thackeray did, a *general statement* of what happens when two people or two forces are brought together, to a *pictorial* or sensory impression of what happens, and the emphasizing of the *dramatic* as well as the *narrative* turning point of the fifth step of the scene.

From a study of the Lecture dealing with the Scene as the Unit you will have learned to develop every meeting of forces through the various stages of episode, episodic scene, encounter, and dramatic scene.

Only half your difficulties, I have said, will disappear when you master these devices. Your problem is only half solved

until you learn to identify at a glance *any* step in a scene. Then only can you be sure of not overlooking first rate scene material.

The following is a typical example of excellent material for scenes which the writer failed to develop pictorially:

1 "On his last job Dane *had been* assayer at the Dorton
2 mines, a big reworking concern. He *had* sworn to stick.
3 Good salary and a chance to climb had helped him throttle
4 his wanderlust for the first time in his thirty years.*—
5 Then into his friendship came June Dorton; slender and
6 pretty as the Arctic primula, brown-tressed, with eyes that
7 seemed to look out of a blue heaven. The girl alone,
8 slight as his chance of winning her, would *have* made him
9 throw out an anchor to windward.* Yet ironically, when
10 he at last wanted to keep a job, the job did not want to
11 keep him. At the start, old Dorton recognized his rare
12 ability and took to him. But somehow things slipped.
13 His reputation as a boomer came with him. In his zeal
14 to do his work properly, and refute the name, he encroached
15 —or had been charged with encroaching—upon the work
16 of Boss Carney, the manager. Somehow this charge
17 started him toboganning. Somehow on several occasions
18 his sheets developed inaccuracies which were costly. Some-
19 how old Dorton found out about his secret worship of
20 June.*
21 "That was the last straw. Dorton, a slightly-bent man
22 of fifty-eight, was so mercuric of temper that on one
23 occasion he was known to have swung a chair at one
24 of his younger aides; missed; smashed the chair on the
25 desk; and then, not a minute later, shaken hands with the
26 fellow and called him 'son.' This fact is mentioned
27 here only to indicate that old Dorton discharged Dane
28 with two short, javelin-sharp words."

On line 2 we learn that "he had sworn to stick." This is a conclusive act, and the fifth step of a scene. It requires no

great imagination to project the other three—the meeting with an employment manager, the expressed purpose of Dane to "sell" himself to the manager. "Can Dane persuade the manager to give him a job," or "Can Dane convince the manager that he is a good assayer?" is the scene narrative-question raised in the mind of the reader by that meeting. The manager's skepticism gives the promise of opposition. Following this is the interchange which forms the third step, and which is brought to a close by the conclusive act, which is the manager's agreement to give him the job, making the fourth step. The effect upon the actors of the interchange is that Dane swears to stick.

The same method can expand the meeting between Dane and June Dorton into a complete scene. There is another scene inherent in the meeting of Dane and Boss Carney. And finally, there is an essentially dramatic scene which is crying to be developed from the fourth step on lines 27 and 28, "old Dorton discharged Dane with two short, javelin-sharp words."

This material has all the ingredients for development into first rate scenes: there are good scene-purposes made interesting by opposition; there are meetings of forces; there is clash; and there are conclusive acts. The writer's plotting sense is good; the material is well chosen. In presenting it, however, the author has placed the task of projecting sensory impressions upon the reader.

It is illuminating to find that most established writers are free from this tendency to summarize. At any rate, it does not show in their work. They have learned craftsmanship. Their experience has shown them that summary, which the amateur appears to think unavoidable, can be avoided in a number of ways. The solution is not difficult. Wherever it appears to be necessary to go back and catch up the threads by summarizing, render your summary pictorially. How can this be done? Very simply, provided you keep in mind that the distinguishing mark of pictorial presentation is that *something is shown happening;* in other words, it is pictorial action.

Wherever possible, *render your summary in interchanges, and dramatize your interchange.* Clash makes drama; and an interchange containing drama is always more interesting than one without. The first process is to give your summary *dramatic form,* the second to give it *dramatic quality.*

The basis of avoiding summary lies in identifying scene steps, particularly the third, which is the interchange. The most easily recognized interchange is the speech of actors. What you as author must keep in mind is that a statement of an author can be *changed into* the speech of an actor. *Speech is action, the action of a character.* Once you grasp this, your difficulties with summary are over. You will have learned at least to give dramatic form to your summary. Instead of being a liability, the necessity for explanatory matter becomes an asset, for it permits you, while presenting your explanatory matter pictorially, and dramatically, to differentiate your actors by delineating their characters through conversation.

There is more than one method of avoiding summary through speech. This speech may consist of the uninterrupted speech of one character or it may consist of an interchange of conversation. Probably the oldest method of presenting summary through the speech of a single person is the soliloquy. It is going more or less out of fashion, because it is somewhat too obvious, too apparently a device of the author. Using it with discretion, however, you may cause it to serve a useful purpose. When the explanatory matter is something known only to one person, you may communicate it to the reader by having that person indulge in a soliloquy, particularly if the person soliloquizing is an aged person, a garrulous person or a person who lives much alone.

Here is an example of soliloquy undisguised:

"Of course, they're all dears, my family," said Alyse; "but as fiction material there is nothing to them; no drama. You know; no colour; just nice ordinary, unimaginative dears. They're utterly unstimulating. That's why I can't live at home, and create. They don't understand it, poor dears; but what could I possibly find to write about at home?"

Soliloquy. (From "Home Brew" by Grace Sartwell Mason, reprinted from *The Saturday Evening Post* in The O. Henry Memorial Award Prize Stories of 1923.)

" 'Hell!' he growled. 'Isn't that the way of things? Just when I'm finishing up my collections here, too, and planning to catch the next steamer north. No Christmas at home this year! Let's see—how many of the damn things does he say he wants?' He re-read the final paragraphs of the letter, mumbling them aloud in the manner of one in whom many years of living alone in the back of the world's beyond have bred the habit of self-conversation."

Because this special soliloquy is short it is acceptable, but the soliloquy becomes tiresome, and is hard to make convincing—as soliloquy; because it is not customary for people nowadays to express their thoughts thus. On the other hand, it is quite customary for modern people to express themselves frankly in a private diary or in a letter, both of which are convincing and authentic, especially the letter. Here is a letter used by Phoebe H. Gilkyson in a story called "The Amateur": (The Harper Prize Short Stories. Harper & Bros. 1925,) to explain the background of a character:

"You see, Becky, old thing," ran the letter, "I have tact enough not to bring this bunch to Wynnedale, much as I'd like to see you milking cows on the old homestead. But something tells me we'd be as congenial as Capital and Labor with your in-laws. Honest, dearie, Paige is sure a sweet thing and I suppose you know your mind but I often wonder how can you stand those mossy old swells. If you'd stayed in the business Sam Dunne would of given you a big start this year and you'd of been famous in no time and drawing big money. He told Edna that you had a real screen personality. Or you could of married that rich Kelly fellow, and been sailing around in your own yacht this minute. But you and I both know, dearie, that you had more brains than the rest of us and if you got what you want stick to it. God bless you. But

don't forget the old days. Come early Wednesday night. Tell Paige we'll bring plenty of hooch. As I remember, he doesn't mind diluting his blue blood with alcohol once in a while. . . ."

The second method of avoiding summary through conversation is by introducing the straight out-and-out statement of the information by a character. Between such a statement and the soliloquy the only difference is in illusion. In the soliloquy the speaker is supposed to be alone; the disclosure is made unconsciously and involuntarily. In the second place the disclosure is made consciously to one or more listeners. In the soliloquy there is ostensibly no attempt at concealment, because no listener is supposed to be present. Therefore there is a freedom from restraint which permits fulness of disclosure. The soliloquy is ordinarily used when only one character is being presented to the reader, but the second method, the statement of a character, is particularly useful and plausible when such a character is justifying or excusing some course of conduct to a listener or listeners. An example of this method which is worth examination is to be found in "The Light Shines Through" by Octavus Roy Cohen, in *Collier's* for May 29, 1926. Although there are two characters present, the talk is virtually a monologue.

"The warden was kindly—and Terrell had heard the prisoners sing his praises as a just man.

" 'There isn't much to tell, sir. And I guess I might as well admit that I got what was coming to me—although I didn't mean to kill her. I wouldn't hardly believe it when they said she was dead.'

"He drew a deep breath. 'You see, I and her were kind of crazy about each other when we got married—or at least I thought we were. But that was only for a little while. I guess I didn't work so regular and I did run about a bit, and she got to criticizing me and bawling me out for not working—and first thing you know we were fightin' all the time. Squabble, squabble, squabble . . . you never heard the like. Got so I hated to go home—not but what it wasn't just as much my fault as hers.'

"Jamison MacDonald fidgeted. He felt guilty—as though he should tell the man just why he was interested.

" 'Then one day,' continued Terrell, 'we had a fuss and she said she didn't love me any more. Said she probably never had. Well, I stood that—until she got to rubbing it in. Rows all the time. Always telling me she didn't love me. That gets a feller after a while.

" 'One night we had an awful scrap. Jawing away. I had been drinking kind of heavy—and she repeated that thing about not loving me any more. Well, I flashed at her that she must be in love with somebody else, and first thing you know she said yes, she was.

" 'Plenty happened then. Finally I walked out of the house, and for a week we didn't hardly speak. But then we quarreled again, and that love thing came up. Once having told me—she kind of seemed to like to repeat it about loving somebody else. Kept telling me how much better he was than me. . . . And that's all, sir—except one night when things got awful nasty and I was drunk, I hit her—and she died.' "

These first two methods of avoiding summary (the soliloquy spoken or written and the character's statement) are usually employed when a short monologue can be made to contain all the information necessary to acquaint the reader with the antecedent happenings. As soon as a great deal of information has to be conveyed, the burden is usually too much for one speaker. This is self-evident.

If you are going upon a journey by train, you may take with you the manuscript of a story if you are merely commuting. A brief-case will serve. If you propose to stay overnight you will take toilet articles and night clothes; and instead of a brief-case you will take a travelling-bag. Either of these you can carry to and from the train yourself. If you find that you must stay a month away from home you may be able to manage with a rather well-stocked suit case; but you will need the help of a porter in getting it to and from the train. But, if you go for a trip around the world you will need one or more trunks; and you will need two people to carry the trunks.

Keep this parallel in mind in rendering to your reader the explanatory matter of your Beginning. If there is very little you may render it as author. If it begins to grow heavy (anything over, say, 200 words) call in a helper. Be prodigal—get two people to carry the information whenever possible.

A long, uninterrupted monologue is not very convincing. It is likely to degenerate into formal, stilted writing instead of giving the illusion of being the talk of a character. In order to break the long monologue up and keep it from becoming monotonous, interpolations become necessary. These interpolations, if made by the author, cannot be very plausible because it is difficult to give them much variety. They sound artificial. It is far better to abandon the attempt to make one speaker carry the load and to turn to the third method of avoiding summary, which is to give the information in an interchange of talk between two or more characters.

This third method varies very little from the second, the difference being chiefly that greater scope is afforded for characterization. A contrast may be made between the speakers that will help to differentiate them. Instead of a monologue there is a dialogue; or even more than two characters may do the talking. This is the most common method of avoiding summary.

Since this interchange of conversation involves the meeting of two forces (two human beings), it may be presented as an episode, an encounter, or a scene. If much explanatory matter is to be covered, the dramatic scene is best, because the long drawn-out episode is likely to be little improvement over the ordinary summary. By this method—the interchange—you may achieve greater results through combining characterization with explanatory matter. In the episode, ordinarily, the conversation will be very one-sided, the second character interpolating comments or asking questions to break the solidity of the discourse. The reminiscing of one person to another is a natural thing. The apparently accidental unintentional explanation may, by this method, be made a particularly effective vehicle for portraying character, because it

can be made to indicate almost any character trait with great plausibility. The boastful person portrayed in the process of enlarging upon successes; the unsuccessful man recounting the milestones of his failures, can each disclose important happenings contributing to an understanding of the dramatic qualities of the Story Purpose. Reminiscence is particularly helpful in showing a character who is aging, because looking into the past is a definite indication of old age. It is, of course, natural that in explaining the past, one actor may through his comments upon another show definitely not only his own but another actor's characteristics. Here is how Arthur Morrison in a story called "Without Visible Means," which is included in the Modern Library volume "Tales of Mean Streets," makes use of this method:

" 'Why don't nobody let me live?' he snivelled.

" '*I'm* a 'armless bloke enough. I worked at Ritterson's, man and boy, very nigh twenty year. When they come an' ordered us out, I come out with the others peaceful enough; I didn't want to chuck it up. Gawd knows, but I come out promp' when they told me. And when I found another job on the island, four big blokes set about me and 'arf killed me. *I* didn't know the place was blocked. And when two of the blokes was took up, they said I'd get strike-pay—they laughed and chucked me out. An' now I'm a-starvin' on the 'igh-road. An' Skulky . . . blimy . . . *'e's* done me too!' "

From such a monologue a reader can easily pick up the threads of past happenings.

One of the most useful adaptations of the episodic explanation is the one in which a character addresses himself to an animal or to a child. It is a useful device when the author wishes to show that a character has misinterpreted certain actions. It is a clever way of avoiding a soliloquy; it presents the disclosure which such a conversation would involve with a person who could set the character right. It is particularly useful in giving plausibility to people acting at cross purposes. While it possesses none of the disadvantages of the soliloquy, it has all its value of freedom from restraint, because while

the child or animal cannot understand the allusions of the character, the situation is made clear to the reader. To have a man or woman talk to a dog, or a horse, or another animal frequently is more convincing as a piece of character portrayal than any amount of minute character analysis.

But the episodic explanation must of necessity, if it is to avoid dullness, be rather short.

If you have to choose between an episode and an encounter for the presentation of material that happened in point of time *before* the moment of the main situation of your story became apparent, you will do well to decide upon an encounter. Once the Story Purpose has been presented the reader is conscious of a main narrative question. He expects conflict or clash to follow. It is only natural that once the Story Purpose is apparent the main actor will be plunged into a number of encounters growing out of his Purpose, all designed to bring about a solution of the main narrative problem, and to answer the main narrative question.

But you feel that the moment is not yet ripe to present those encounters. You feel that in order to receive the fullest entertainment from those encounters the reader must know about the prior happenings. You realize that the reader expects an encounter or series of encounters; yet you believe that he has been inadequately prepared to derive the most complete thrill from the encounters that would naturally follow his awareness of the Chief Actor's Central Purpose in the Story and which would come naturally in the Body of the story. To give him an episode would be like offering a hungry man a cold ham sandwich when you had promised him a hot tenderloin steak. Under such circumstances the only thing to do is to give him a steak. It is not the steak he expected; but it is just as good a steak. He won't know the difference. In the case of the prior happening introduced after the presentation of the Story Purpose the thing to do is to give the reader, in lieu of the expected encounter, an encounter which is just as good. He expects clash. Give him clash. Only in an encounter can you give him clash. In presenting an encounter,

you will not be able to prolong it very much before a purpose for one actor becomes apparent, and as soon as there is purpose in an interchange it becomes a scene.

As soon as much explanatory matter is to be dramatized it must be presented in a dramatic scene. In fact, whenever explanatory matter can plausibly be contributed by two actors almost equally, the best unit of presentation is the dramatic scene. Particularly is this so in the Story of Decision.

There is an excellent example of the consummately artistic use of such a scene in the story "Shadowed," reprinted in the Case Book. The author makes clear (Lines 1 to 176 that a moment has been reached in the life of the chief actor, Senator Stroude, when he has to choose between going back to the woman in the mountains or breaking his promise. How much is involved in that decision is made clear later in the scene between the Senator and his wife. The result is further intensification of the importance of the moment. The scene occupies lines 355 to 757. Between lines 176 and 355 is the fifth step of the dramatic scene between Stroude and the mountaineer. From it the reader learns how important the moment is to Stroude.

From the foregoing, it will be clear that the fear of dullness through summarizing need present no real obstacle to you, if you are at all master of your craft. It will be clear also that the more successful you are in procuring one of the three values of setting, character, or narrative, the more likely you are to secure the other inadvertently. In a scene designed primarily to give information regarding the involvements of the situation, you perhaps find the character of the actors developing without any conscious effort on your part in that particular direction. But every effort you make at improving yourself in your craft must be designed to keep the reader interested. Summary more than anything else is likely to cause him to lose interest. With a craftsman's knowledge of the various ways of avoiding summary at your command you can easily keep the reader from being bored. Remember always that "There is no answer to boredom."

The desire to attain interest is the one which should be always strongest in the writer. Yet, sometimes, in attempting to achieve this interest the writer loses sight of plausibility. He changes an actor from one scene to another without indicating the change in setting; he makes an actor respond in one scene in a manner entirely inconsistent with his character as shown in previous scenes, or he has incidents happen without any adequate preparation. A glance at the diagram which we used in an early lecture shows that it is your purpose to raise the reader from his ordinary humdrum level of emotion to a new emotional height. How smooth and continuous is that ascent depends upon your ability as an artist. The answer is that any ascent can be made easy, provided that the road is graded. So it is in the short-story. Grading will justify almost any sequence of events. If in Scene I, Shorty Flynn tells a stranger of his ambition to buy a tug-boat, it would be strange if immediately the stranger gave him the money to buy the tug-boat. However, it is not strange to have the stranger give Shorty the money as salvage, when we have been prepared by Shorty's conduct in working the abandoned and disabled schooner into port.

It is obvious that in order to utilize these various devices, the soliloquy, the statement, the interchange between a main actor and another actor, one condition is essential. That condition is the presence of the main actor or the presence of the main actor and another person. The most knotty problem confronting you as a short-story writer is the one wherein you have to present to the reader much explanatory matter, and that explanatory matter is known only to one person in the story, that person being the chief actor. The characteristics of that chief actor prevent him from making any such statement as are permitted under the circumstances we have just been considering. The chief actor may be a reticent person; he may be an evasive person; and again he may have nobody to talk to. Yet, the happenings involved have taken place, and before the reader can really comprehend the importance of the main situation he ought to be made aware of those happenings. What is to

be done? In order that the reader may have a complete understanding of the importance of the main situation, he must have presented to him happenings which exist only in the mind of the main actor.

Only by a knowledge of craftsmanship can you get yourself out of this dilemma, and by so doing save your reader from dullness. You must understand how to render an actor's thoughts pictorially. These thoughts of a character who looks into the past consist of his visualization of past happenings. For the moment he is unconscious of the present. Upon the screen of his memory former happenings pass in review. The past becomes the present. The actor is unconscious of time, temporarily, so that to all intents and purposes he is viewing an actual contemporary scene. Your task, as an artist, is to make that scene out of the past appear just as real to your readers as it appears to the actor.

If the actor sees a picture of himself and somebody else meeting, you must present that meeting and the interchange growing out of it to your readers pictorially and dramatically. By this method you avoid summary. You actually make out of summary an asset rather than a liability by presenting pictorially and dramatically the actor's thought in a scene or scenes out of the past, and then the reader will read that antecedent scene exactly as if it followed in regular chronological order. Although it is earlier in point of time, it will be presented exactly as if it were later in point of time. The only difference is in the transitional sentence or paragraph, which indicates that change of time. The transition of time is backward instead of forward.

Ordinarily, you will find no difficulty in changing from one scene to a scene which *follows* it naturally. There, therefore, ought to be no difficulty in changing from a scene to one which *precedes* it in point of time. If the reader were to have presented to him the scene without the introductory sentence or paragraph, there would be no difference whatsoever in its appearance. The four steps would be exactly the same, and so would the fifth. Usually, writers are able

to make this change in time in a sentence or two. You may do it, for example, in some such words as these: "As he looked upon that familiar scene, he saw again the face of his brother as he had looked that night two weeks ago." Then, you allow the antecedent scene to unfold itself in the regular, natural way of any scene. The action is portrayed by you pictorially and dramatically.

You will find no difficulty in doing this once you learn to recognize the structural divisions of every scene. Each scene is a unit consisting of a meeting, which brings the actor and the force together; of the encounter arising from it, which is the outgrowth of a purpose; and following the encounter there is the decisive act. Each scene ought to be able to stand on its own feet regardless of the order in which it is arranged within the complete story. Used in its chronological order it presents no difficulty in presentation. If any such difficulty in presentation seems to defeat your attempt to write this "flash-back" scene, the remedy is not difficult. Write the introductory sentence exactly as if it were a chronological forwarding of the action, then change the words from the future to the past. You can almost always judge the experience and ability of the writer by the ease with which he slides back into an antecedent scene.

In "The Glib and Oily Art," the *Saturday Evening Post,* April 24, 1926, Ben Ames William opens his story by describing the main actor as he enters a country store one night. In order to understand the importance of the situation it is necessary that the reader shall be told what has happened previously. Mr. Williams accomplishes the change in time backward to that morning by a single sentence giving the situation for the episodic scene, which is the purpose of one actor to get information from the other; this growing into the scene purpose of the dramatic scene, which is to persuade the other man to sell him some apples. You can analyze this extract from Mr. Williams's story as being an episodic scene followed by a dramatic scene, or you can say that it is a dramatic scene, in which the purpose (to get information as to whether

Ray has seen the moose) is introductory matter to the real purpose of the scene (to persuade Ray to sell him some apples.) It is interesting to note that while the purpose is that of Clemons, the point-of-view is that of Ray. However, I want you to notice, especially that the words "on this particular morning" are a flash-*back* in time for the purpose of giving the reader information.

On this particular morning, for instance, Wat Clemons, the apple buyer, *had* stopped at his house to see Ray; and when the young man came out into the dooryard, Clemons asked:

"You see that old bull moose up in your orchard just as I drove up?"

Ray shook his head. "I was in the shed," he said regretfully, and turned that way. "There now, is he?"

"Made off when I come along," Clemons explained. He added, with some unction in his tones, "Guess it was the old black one. Say, he was a sight too!"

Ray felt a sick regret at the lost opportunity. This big bull known as the "old black one" had been seen but three or four times in a year past, and a glimpse of him was always notable. His stature was tremendous, his color almost ebony, his spread of horns beyond belief. Thus said those who had encountered the vast creature.

"Wish't I'd seen him," Ray confessed wistfully. "But I didn't happen to."

Clemons nodded and came to his business. "What are you figuring to get for your apples this year?" he asked, glancing toward the orchard on the rising ground north of the house.

"I ain't figured," Ray told him.

"I'm paying three, on the tree," Clemons said. "And pick 'em myself. Don't matter so much, where they're going to be canned. And you furnish the barrels."

"Barrels is sixty-five cents," Ray protested mildly. "I got to get more than that."

"I can get 'em for forty-five," Clemons argued, "down around Hope."

"You'd better furnish 'em then," Ray told him; and Clem-

ons hesitated, and then suggested that they walk up to the orchard and inspect the fruit.

On their way back to the house fifteen minutes later he said thoughtfully, "Ray, where'd you get that barrel of eating apples I got off of you last year? I'd rather have them than a McIntosh."

Ray answered readily: "Them are from a wild tree down in the woods. We usually figure to get a barrel or two and keep 'em."

"Bearing this year, is it?" Clemons asked; and Ray nodded.

"Be three-four barrel, I figure," he replied.

"Them are as good eating apples as I ever seen," Clemons assured him; and by and by, having made his trade, the man drove away. Ray was to get three dollars, Clemons to furnish the barrels and pick the fruit; and Ray would help with the picking and throw in a barrel of the wild apples for Clemons himself.

As you examine short-stories analytically, you will become more and more impressed by the evidence of careful workmanship in the stories of the successful writers. Almost invariably, you will find two things which stand out. First, Interest is always heightened by dramatization. Second, Plausibility is attained by grading.

A word or two would not be amiss here in regard to the use of coincidence. You may use coincidence as much as you like to project a Purpose. Coincidence is Fate. The story is the story of a Person struggling against Fate. But you must not use coincidence to solve a problem. The modern short-story deals with the solution of a problem by an actor; not the solution of a problem by Fate. Remember that any problem can be made interesting to the reader when he knows what depends upon it. This means that in the Beginning of the story he must receive as much explanation as possible without being bored. It is to show you how to give a large amount of explanation in the Beginning of your story, and at the same time avoid boring the reader, that you have been asked to study the principles of this Lecture very carefully.

These ought to be the net result of your study.

1. Give every bit of information necessary.
2. Put the information in *dramatic form.*
3. By causing two people to *clash* over the information make it dramatic in quality.
4. If the demands of Plausibility call for an *episodic* presentation, extract drama from the *fifth step.*
5. Practice changing *summarized* information into dramatic interchanges.
6. Practice changing the opening of scenes so that the sequence becomes flash-back instead of flash-forward.

Problem 17

THE BODY OF THE STORY
ITS PLOTTING—ITS PRESENTATION

At the risk of being repetitious, let me say again that a story consists of Setting, Character, and Crises, so arranged as to form a pattern or plot.

Experience covering the reading of thousands of short-stories in manuscript has shown me that the progress of the average aspiring writer may be fairly accurately charted. He learns first to fill in the details of his settings in a satisfactory way. Next he learns, although not so easily or so quickly, to differentiate his characters and to endow them with life and individuality. But to learn the proper organization of the crises of his story takes longer. This is the real test of the writer. Here patience is required—patience and application. Success comes after long and arduous practice. Like all drill, it is not pleasant; but fortunately, because it is drill and because it is mechanical, it can be mastered. We have seen that the method of organizing and writing that portion of the short-story which we have agreed to call the Beginning can be learned, once we know what is required of us. The problem is one of blending, or arranging our materials of Setting, Character, and Crises in a pattern or plot. The crisis with which you are concerned in the Beginning is the main situation. This main situation (something to be accomplished or something to be decided) is a narrative crisis. But in addition to narrative crises, there are dramatic crises. In the Beginning there is a dramatic crisis whenever the thing to be accomplished involves the promise of conflict to overcome a difficulty,

the promise of conflict to overcome or remove an opponent, or the promise of conflict to avert threatened disaster.

In *presenting* the Beginning—as opposed to *plotting* the Beginning—the problem is one of deciding between the different structural units into which the material is to be cast. Principally this is a question of deciding between a single interchange in which shall be set forth all the promises of conflict, or a number of interchanges. If the choice is a single interchange it will in all likelihood be a dramatic scene. At the close of that scene the reader will know that the effect of the scene upon the actor was to project a purpose for him which becomes the main narrative purpose of the story, and which gives the whole story its narrative unity. This is the ideal choice. In the four steps of a scene you make clear to your reader all the promises of conflict. Then, in the fifth step of the scene (usually the reflections of the actor upon what took place in that scene) you make clear the main narrative question of your story.

There would be no special problem in writing any Beginning if this single scene were always possible. Not always, however, is this the case. A scene is ordinarily an interchange between two people. Frequently the involvements of your story cannot be plausibly made clear in a single interchange. It would involve summary—that most deadening form of giving information. Whenever the Beginning involves more than one interchange, one of them will set forth the main purpose of the main actor, each of the others will set forth a promise of conflict. Three such promises of conflict are possible, and must be included: the promise of conflict to overcome a difficulty, the promise of conflict to overcome an opponent, and the promise of conflict to avert threatened disaster. The interchanges in the Beginning are presentation units, the crises either dramatic or narrative plot units. We can phrase this another way by saying that the first four steps of a scene are concerned with presentation. (Step 1 the meeting. Step 2, the actor's purpose in that scene. Step 3, the interchange between the actor and a force opposed

to his purpose in the scene. Step 4 the conclusive act of that scene by which the reader learns that the purpose has been achieved or abandoned). The fifth step is concerned with plot.

When we talk about the technical problem involved in plotting the Body of a short story what we really must keep in mind is that the Body of the story is made up of dramatic scenes, and that at the conclusion of each one of these scenes there is a crisis or turning-point in the plot. This is the fifth step. This crisis may be either a narrative or a dramatic crisis. In the Body of the story, as in the Beginning of the story, the fifth step is the plot step. Plotting the Body of the short-story boils down, then, to two processes: one, planning dramatic scenes; two, making sure that the fifth step of each of these dramatic scenes shall form a crisis or turning-point in the main purpose of the actor, which is the same thing as saying that it shall be a turning-point or crisis of the main narrative-question of the story. Only in this way can you achieve complete plot unity.

Let us consider these two processes one by one, examining first the process of planning or projecting dramatic scenes. In its simplest form this process takes each of the promises of conflict set forth in the Beginning. By developing the promise of difficulty shown in the Beginning, you show the actor making an attempt to remove or overcome the difficulty. This forms the first scene of the Body of the story. The result of that attempt (that is, the fifth step of that scene) is a defeat, which forms a Narrative Hindrance to the actor's main purpose. Following this the writer develops the next promise of conflict contained in the Beginning, which is the promise of conflict to overcome a dangerous opponent. Again the fifth step of the scene forms a defeat or hindrance. There may be two such scenes, one an oral encounter, the other a physical encounter, each resulting in a defeat, forming a turning-point of hindrance to the main narrative Purpose of the story. As a result of the accumulation of these defeats the main actor will be in a position where he faces imminent

disaster. The final scene of the Body of the story will be the attempt of the actor to avert this disaster, the promise of which was foreshadowed in the Beginning. By this method the promises of conflict which form the dramatic crises of the Beginning are developed to form the scenes of the Body of the story. When a writer says that the Beginning of his story is good, but the Body does not sustain the interest, he is usually wrong in trying to remedy the lack by tinkering with the scenes of the Body. If he understands plotting he will first ascertain if he has a really strong Beginning.

Often a story may open well, only to peter out because the Story Purpose is not one which lends itself to natural development through the projection of a number of interesting conflicts in the Body of the story. Often the story which loses interest as it unfolds does so because the conflicts it presents are not the apparently inevitable projection of the promises of conflict contained in the Beginning. Or it may be that there was no such conflict promised, that the interest in the Beginning was in the scene and not in the plot. In such a case no amount of tinkering with the scenes of the Body would be of the slightest use as far as the plot goes. The trouble is really in the Beginning. You should make no promises of conflicts which you are not prepared to fulfill. If you do you are cheating your reader, who will resent being fooled. You will be like the concessionnaire who had a side-show at Coney Island at the time that there was a great scare in respect to man-eating sharks. The sign outside his tent read, in big letters, "Come in and see the man-eating shark." When the visitors went inside they found a man languidly eating some fried fish, ostensibly shark. You can't do this in fiction. If you promise a thrill, a thrill you must furnish. You can do so in two ways: by developing the conflicts, or by playing up the crises. There is an anecdote often told about a very timid mouse who drank what he thought was water, only to find it was gin. So effective was this gin that the hitherto fearful mouse emerged from his hole and issued a ringing challenge, "bring on that damned cat." In developing the scenes in the

Body of your story your task is to "bring on that damned cat," or more accurately the conflict with the cat.

Not all stories lend themselves to the development of each of the separate promises of conflict, for the reason that all these may center in a single individual. The story "Once and Always," by John P. Marquand (See Case No. 8) is an example. In the person of Lemuel Gower are concentrated all the promise of difficulty, or opposition, and of disaster to Gideon Higsbee's purpose. In the single meeting with Lemuel Gower, line 917 to 1235, Gideon is brought to the verge of disaster. The fifth step of that scene, lines 1236 to 1332, is the talk he has with his friends, which shows him to be upon the verge of disaster. The plot interest is played up by playing up the crisis which is the result of the scene.

There is a rather bitter and scornful challenge hurled by one person at another whom he thinks he has placed in a hole. It is "You can't laugh that off." This ought to be the attitude of all observers toward the actor in a story at the end of each scene in the Body of the story. The fifth step of each scene should show the character to be "in wrong."

You will remember that in discussing the method of plotting the short-story we found that the reader's interest is captured at the outset by the introduction of a main narrative-question, which is not actually answered until the end of the story, even though the outcome may be guessed. This main narrative question, never lost sight of throughout the story, gives the story its unity, its singleness of effect. Thus the interest is sustained throughout the body of the story by making out of each scene of the story an attempt of the character to achieve his purpose. It is in order to develop this narrative question that the scenes in the Body of your story are written.

What are you called upon to do in the Body of your story? Knowing that, and knowing, from your study of the preceding lectures, the best method of doing it, your problem becomes simplified. What you have to do is to *develop* the struggle of the hero against the difficulty, the opposition, and disaster

at which you hinted in the Beginning of your story, and this is done, you find from your study of the principles of plotting, through a series of *scenes* in each of which you introduce a new and immediate scene-purpose, from which grows a minor narrative-question. This minor or scenic purpose, with its explanatory matter, makes up the Beginning of the scene. In the Body of that scene you hold the reader's interest by showing within the scene a nice alternation of furthering and hindering minor crises. These crises within the scene will be caused by the action of the main character, or the action of others stimulated by the action of the main character in his attempts at answering the main narrative question, of solving the main problem or extricating himself from the main dilemma. But since crisis or plot is only one of the three ingredients which you have to blend, you find that the scene, like the complete story, is composed of Setting, Character, and Crises combined to cause a desired effect.

The requirements for the scene, then, are the same in the Body of your story, in essence, as those for the complete story. The distinguishing feature of the Body of your story is that the character meets the opposing forces, or at least one of them, and that *conflict* ensues. In this conflict, there is within the scene a nice alternation of FURTHERING AND HINDERING minor CRISES, as a result of which the reader is kept in suspense by being forced to ask himself instinctively: "What will happen next?" or "How can he ever succeed in overcoming *that* obstacle?" There is at the completion of each scene a conclusive act which is a definite answer to the minor narrative question raised at the outset of the scene, showing that the main character has either succeeded or failed in the conflict which made up the scene. If the victory assists in the successful solution of the main problem, the result is a crisis of the Main or Story Narrative Question of the story, which is a main crisis of Furtherance; if the result is a draw or a defeat, delaying the successful solution of the main problem, it is a Hindrance of the Main Narrative Question. Only a victory for the main character or his agent is a *Furtherance* of the

Main Narrative Question; a defeat is a *Hindrance,* so is a draw; because the draw answers the minor narrative question of the scene in the negative. It shows that the obstacle has not been overcome. The Body of the story may have any number of scenes. The number will depend, of course, upon the number of obstacles or opposing forces which the main character encounters.

Throughout the Body of the story, while the action of the story is unfolding, the outcome of the main problem raised is still in doubt. It may be ultimate defeat; it may be ultimate victory; it may be a draw. Until this doubt is resolved the interest is the interest of suspense; all incidents must be selected primarily to advance the action. There must be *within each scene* a nice alternation of furthering and hindering action. Without the furthering and hindering action there would be no clash. This clash, then, is the first requirement. Let us never lose sight of that. Naturally, to have clash you must have conflicting elements, and these elements must clash in such a way that the result is a crisis in the main narrative-plot, which is either a main Furtherance or a main Hindrance. In that way, the interest is cumulative. With these requirements always before you, the working out of the Body of your story is simplified. In each scene there are only four simple steps to be taken. One is to set forth the actor's immediate purpose, introducing the explanatory matter which is necessary to an understanding of that purpose, in such a way that a scene narrative question is opened up. A second is to bring together the opposing forces. Although sometimes the order may vary, it is best to introduce the purpose before bringing the forces together, because you then get a scene narrative-question going at once. The third step is to show those forces in conflict. The fourth is to show the results of that clash, as an answer to the minor narrative-question of that scene, and to make clear to the reader in a fifth step that it is a narrative Furtherance or Hindrance to the main narrative question of your story. If it is a main narrative Furtherance, interest in the outcome of the main Narrative-question will at once drop,

unless there occurs very quickly either a main narrative Hindrance, which is a defeat for the main actor or a main dramatic Hindrance, which is the promise of conflict to remove a difficulty, to overcome an opponent, or the imminence of disaster.

In the first scene of the Body of your story you will ordinarily introduce an attempt of the character to solve his problem, or to extricate himself from his dilemma, or to answer the story narrative-question raised in the Beginning of the story. Usually, this attempt will result in a failure or setback; this will form the first of the main crises of hindrance to the main narrative-question raised in the Beginning of your story. *To this there is scarcely any exception.* If the result of this first meeting or attempt is successful, the resulting crisis will be a *Furtherance* to the story narrative-question. It should immediately be followed by a dramatic Hindrance or promise of conflict or disaster. In this case the situation of the next scene will ordinarily introduce the attempt of some other character to prevent the main character from accomplishing his purpose, or it will show the main character attempting to meet some obstacle which he does not succeed in overcoming. That is to say, ordinarily, if the main crisis at the close of the first Body scene is a Furtherance, not only shall suspense be restored by a dramatic Hindrance; but the main crisis at the close of the next Body scene will be a Hindrance to the main narrative-question. Ordinarily, also, the Furtherances will be the result of the action of the main character or of some force set in motion by the main character. Hindrances will ordinarily be the result of the action of characters or forces opposed to the main character.

Remember that in working out the Body of your story, your task is the same as the dramatist's—to show characters in action—to achieve drama. In the Beginning of your story you have introduced your characters, identified them and differentiated them and have given us some inkling as to their probable conduct. That is all you need to do for them in the Beginning. In the scenes which make up the Body of your story, you fill in the background and the details of the character's

appearance and actions, so that they are clear to the reader; otherwise your full effect is not achieved. Naturally, you will boil down to the minimum the explanatory matter, of each scene. If you are wise you will have given most of it in your Beginning, so that you may give all the space you need to the action of each scene. That is the method of working out the scenes in the Body of your story. Two things you must have,—Clash in the interchanges and definitely marked resulting crises of Hindrance, either narrative or dramatic.

Remember always that the interest in the Body of a story may come from either the interchanges or from the crises of Hindrance to the main narrative-question of the story. One is scene interest, the other is plot interest. Scene interest comes from the reader's concern with the clash between forces, because of his sympathy with the main character or with his purpose. The forces will be

(a) Some trait of character in the main actor, at variance with the actor's main purpose. (See "The Face in the Window," lines 546–550 (Case No. 9 in the Case Book).

Her clear-headedness in foreseeing difficulties may prevent attempt.

(b) Some natural force, or some condition of environment, of which the following scene is an excellent example.

FROM

A LEANDER OF THE EAST RIVER

BY

RICHARD HARDING DAVIS

(In "Van Bibber and Others")

At the northern end of the Island the grass runs high, and there are no houses of any sort upon it. It reaches out into a rocky point, where it touches the still terribly swift eddies of

Hell Gate, and its sharp front divides the water and directs it towards Astoria on the east and the city on the west. Hefty determined to walk off from the gang of workmen until he could drop into this grass and to lie there until night. This would be easy, as there was only one man to watch them, for they were all there for only ten days or one month, and the idea that they should try to escape was hardly considered. So Hefty edged off farther from the gang, and then, while the guard was busy lighting his pipe, dropped into the long grass and lay there quietly, after first ridding himself of his shoes and jacket. At six o'clock a bell tolled and the guard marched away, with his gang shambling after him. Hefty guessed they would not miss him until they came to count heads at supper-time; but even now it was already dark, and lights were showing on the opposite bank. He had selected the place he meant to swim for—a green bank below a row of new tenements, a place where a few bushes still stood, and where the boys of Harlem hid their clothes when they went in swimming.

At half-past seven it was quite dark, so dark, in fact, that the three lanterns which came tossing towards him told Hefty that his absence had been discovered. He rose quickly and stepped cautiously, instead of diving, into the river, for he was fearful of hidden rocks. The current was much stronger than he had imagined, and he hesitated for a moment, with the water pulling at his knees, but only for a moment; for the men were hunting for him in the grass.

He drew the gray cotton shirt from his shoulders, and threw it back of him with an exclamation of disgust, and of relief at being a free man again, and struck his broad, bare chest and the biceps of his arms with a little gasp of pleasure in their perfect strength, and then bent forward and slid into the river.

The current from the opening at Hell Gate caught him up as though he had been a plank. It tossed him and twisted him and sucked him down. He beat his way for a second to the surface and gasped for breath and was drawn down again, striking savagely at the eddies which seemed to twist his limbs

into useless, heavy masses of flesh and muscle. Then he dived down and down, seeking a possibly less rapid current at the muddy bottom of the river; but the current drew him up again until he reached the top, just in time, so it seemed to him, to breathe the pure air before his lungs split with the awful pressure. He was gloriously and fiercely excited by the unexpected strength of his opponent and the probably fatal outcome of his adventure. He stopped struggling, that he might gain fresh strength, and let the current bear him where it would, until he saw that it was carrying him swiftly to the shore and to the rocks of the Island. And then he dived again and beat his way along the bottom, clutching with his hands at the soft, thick mud, and rising only to gasp for breath and sink again. His eyes were smarting hotly, and his head and breast ached with pressure that seemed to come from the inside and threatened to burst its way out. His arms had grown like lead and had lost their strength, and his legs were swept and twisted away from his control and were numb and useless. He assured himself fiercely that he could not have been in the water for more than five minutes at the longest, and reminded himself that he had often before lived in it for hours, and that this power, which was so much greater than his own, could not outlast him. But there was no sign of abatement in the swift, cruel uncertainty of its movement, and it bore him on and down or up as it pleased. The lights on the shore became indistinct, and he finally confused the two shores, and gave up hope of reaching the New York side, except by accident, and hoped only to reach some solid land alive. He did not go over all of his past life, but the vision of Mary Casey did come to him, and how she would not know that he had been innocent. It was a little thing to distress himself about at such a time, but it hurt him keenly. And then the lights grew blurred, and he felt that he was making heavy mechanical strokes that barely kept his lips above the water-line. He felt the current slacken perceptibly, but he was too much exhausted to take advantage of it, and drifted forward with it, splashing feebly like a dog, and holding his

head back with a desperate effort. A huge, black shadow, only a shade blacker than the water around him, loomed up suddenly on his right, and he saw a man's face appear in the light of a hatchway and disappear again.

"Help!" he cried, "help!" but his voice sounded far away and barely audible. He struck out desperately against the current, and turned on his back and tried to keep himself afloat where he was. "Help!" he called again, feebly grudging the strength it took to call even that. "Help! Quick, for God's sake! help me!"

Something heavy, black and wet struck him sharply in the face and fell with a splash on the water beside him. He clutched for it quickly, and clasped it with both hands and felt it grow taut, and then gave up thinking, and they pulled him on board.

When he came to himself, the captain of the canal-boat stooped and took a fold of the gray trousers between his thumb and finger. Then he raised his head and glanced across at the big black Island, where lights were still moving about on the shore, and whistled softly. But Hefty looked at him so beseechingly that he arose and came back with a pair of old boots and a suit of blue jeans.

"Will you send these back to me to-morrow?" he asked.

"Sure," said Hefty.

"And what'll I do with these?" said the captain, holding up the gray trousers.

"Anything you want, except to wear 'em," said Mr. Burke, feebly, with a grin.

The force to which the main actor is opposed may be some member of the animal kingdom, including man. The conflict which arises may be oral, as in the scene between Lemuel Gower and Gideon Higsbee, at Agamemnon House (lines 71 to 171 of "Once and Always." See Case No. 8 in the Case Book). It may begin as oral and become physical, as in the scene between Cora McBride and Hap Ruggam. See Case No. 9 in the Case Book, lines 958 to 1370.

The conflict may be with a beast, as in the following scene:

FROM

THE LOPSTICK

BY

SAMUEL SCOVILLE, JR.

(IN *The Red Book* for APRIL, 1926)

As the fighters stared at each other, Red shouted for help with all his might, but no answer was returned. The clattering roar of the stream beside the camp drowned out all the other sounds.

It was evident to the man that he could slip away and escape, for the dogs would keep the bear from following far. If he did so, however, it was equally evident to him that one and perhaps both of them would be destroyed before he could return with help. Their fighting blood had been aroused by their wounds to such a pitch that they could not be called off from the bear; and sooner or later, if he left them, the crafty grizzly would lure them within reach of his fatal paws.

As Red looked down upon the dogs, panting and blood-stained, that had saved his life at the risk of their own, and saw the look of absolute trust and devotion in their eyes as they gazed up at him, he decided to fight out that desperate duel to finish. He could no more have left them to be killed, and escaped himself, than he could have deserted tried and proven human comrades.

Then began a battle grim and great. The man ceased shouting; the dogs growled no more; nor did the bear make another sound. It was such a fight as a man of the Stone Age might have waged against the dread cave-bear in the days when the earth was young. The craft of the man was pitted against the strength of the brute, and the fierceness of his forebears of a million years ago flared like fire through the veneer of civilization as he faced the stark ferocity of the beast. In bear and dogs alike blazed a courage which nothing but death could

quench, while no warrior, Viking or champion among all of Red's far-away ancestors ever faced a battle to the death more bravely than did their red-haired cow-puncher descendant that day.

Time and time again he buried his short and ineffectual weapon to the hilt in the black body of the bear before him as it turned to attack one dog after the other. Again and again, past all counting, the maddened brute whirled around and started to scramble across the log which separated him from the man, only to turn back each time to rid himself of the unendurable agony of the dogs' rending teeth. Back and forth and around and around in a hurrying, gasping, panting circle the fight went on and on, until it seemed to Red as if all the world had dwindled and faded away to that narrow space of trampled turf, and he saw as through a red mist the glittering eyes of the bear, Nodu's blazing brown ones and the pale flame of Yed's twin fires.

For long the advantage was with the bear. He seemed to have inexhaustible resources of strength and endurance, and to regard knife-stabs as no more than pin-pricks. Suddenly changing his tactics, however, the black beast feinted a jab at the farther dog, and as Red leaned forward almost automatically to deliver his thrust, struck at him with all the force of his great body. Fortunately for the man, the bear swung a fraction of a second too soon and fell short by an inch. Even so, one of his crooked claws cut clear through Red's thumb, dashing the knife out of his grasp and putting his right hand out of commission for the rest of the battle.

As he staggered back, weaponless, both dogs threw themselves upon the bear again, and just managed to keep him from following up the advantage he had won. Fortunately for Red, the flying knife struck the bush back of him, dropping almost at his feet, and he recovered it just in time to save the life of Nodu. With another of his unexpected strokes the bear had sent the Greenland dog flying, and was scrambling over the log after him when Red leaned over and stabbed him again, this time with his left hand, at a spot some distance from the

place where his other blows had been delivered. Feeble and ineffectual as the thrust was, it seemed to hurt the bear more than any he had yet received, for turning like a flash, he rushed at Red and for the first time since the beginning of the fight gave again his deep, bellowing roar. As the monster started after the man, Nodu staggered to his feet and rushed upon him. It was the husky, however, who reached the bear first and slashed him with his fierce teeth until he turned upon the dog furiously.

As the young cow-puncher dragged himself forward, he felt strangely numb, and a black cloud seemed to be slowly gathering about his head from the strain of the long battle and the loss of blood.

With a great effort he pulled himself once more across the log. As the cloud closed about him, a single thought dinned against his fading consciousness—to strike one last blow. Leaning far out, he sank the knife back of the angle of the bear's left foreshoulder in nearly the same spot as before, and placing his crippled right hand above his left, forced the weapon in with the last bit of strength which he had left until point, blade and handle disappeared from sight in the grizzly's body. Then with a final effort, Red drew himself back and dropped beside the log which lay between him and his opponent.

Not a second too soon did he reach the protection of that slight barrier, for as if his last thrust had released a spring the bear leaped clear of the ground and fell directly across the log, his fierce claws dangling not a foot above the cowboy's body.

With glazing eyes the huge beast thrust his open jaws toward the man beneath him. But, even as he did so, with a groan like that of a dying man, he settled back dead, his heart cut through by the man's last thrust.

Then the black cloud closed down over Red and he knew nothing more until he was aroused by Nodu licking his face.

A glance over the Case Book will show you that it is largely because of the interest of the scenes that the stories hold your interest. The more intense the conflict the greater the scene

interest. The more important the main Purpose or Problem the greater the plot interest. The nearer the character is to disaster the greater the dramatic plot interest. In selecting obstacles, therefore, make them as difficult as possible to overcome; this will give you plot interest. The ideal obstacle from the story-writer's point of view is the obstacle which is apparently insuperable. For an excellent example of such selection, examine Frank R. Adams's story SPARE PARTS (See Case Book, Case No. 3.)

In working out the scenes in your story for scene interest, select opponents who will naturally clash. *Then show the clash.* Don't be too tender hearted with your characters. Get them into rows.

For plot interest get them into difficulties. Here is an excellent example of a man in difficulties. A man finds himself in a cave in a hill-side. On one side is escape, on the other three sides he may burrow indefinitely:

FROM

IN THE BAMBOO TRAP

BY

ROBERT S. LEMMON

He started up eagerly, the realization that he could burrow his way out clearing his brain and putting new life in his racked body. He reached for the sheath knife at his belt, the only digging tool that he had. As he stood there with it in his hand a thought flashed over him that drove all the zest from his face.

"I don't know where to begin," he muttered. "Which is the west side?"

He looked about helplessly at the prison that hemmed him in. Somewhere, to right or left, ahead or behind, that mass of earth or rock must be comparatively thin, hardly more than a shell separating him from freedom and the broad reaches of the sky. If he could find that spot, strike that down-hill side,

he might be able to dig through to the outer world in a few hours. If he missed it, started work on the wrong side, his burrowing would only lead him deeper into the mountain, wasting his strength and the precious element of time. And between those two extremes, the heart-warming right and the hopelessly wrong, was no faintest clue to guide him to a decision. Yes, there was one—his compass, of course! Stupid not to have thought of that before; the surest possible proof everything was all right now. He fumbled in the side pocket of his coat and drew out the instrument, a watchlike affair in a heavy nickel case. *His first glance showed the needle bent crazily beneath the shattered glass, twisted and utterly ruined by the crash of his fall.*

Mather's face went hard as he tilted the broken thing in his hand, testing its uselessness with a sort of grim irony.

"Lo-o!" he said bitterly, "you're about as much good to me as a piece of cheese, aren't you? Or a chunk of lead—because I could eat the cheese."

Keep in mind that the impression of reality is important. The reader must never be allowed to pause in order to question anything in regard to detail. Make your scenes pictorial. Stress the impression. Interpolate.

Look, attitude and gesture, tone of voice—subtle acts, between speeches. It is best always to precede the speech by the interpolation. Thus:

"Red blushed, 'I'm sorry sir,' he said," rather than "'I'm sorry Sir,' said Red, blushing."

And it is easier for the reader to visualize what is taking place if you say:

"Red had the fiery nature which his coloring suggested, and with hand clenched, he impulsively started for Masters. 'That's a lie' he shouted."

Is better than:

"'That's a lie.' Red had the fiery nature which his coloring suggested; and with hand clenched, had impulsively started for Masters."

One thing is certain. You should always do this whenever it is not apparent from the remark that there is a change of speaker or that a new speaker has come upon the scene.

If the demands of your plot make it necessary or desirable for you to use an episode instead of a scene, *be sure* to follow that episode with a dramatic or narrative Hindrance. For example, lines 684 to 704 in "Spare Parts" (Case No. 3 in the Case Book) are an episode, but they are immediately followed by a dramatic Hindrance (the promise of disaster to the whole enterprise, on lines 705 to 718).

If the end of a scene shows a narrative furtherance to the main narrative question of the story it should be followed at once by a dramatic Hindrance. For example, lines 839 to 843 show that Cora McBride ("The Face in the Window" Case No. 9 in the Case Book) has overcome her first obstacle, the snow-covered waste, but immediately there comes a dramatic promise of conflict and disaster, which is a dramatic Hindrance, on lines 844 to 957.

In plotting and presenting the scenes in the Body of your story, remember that Interest is in clash or conflict, and in uncertainty as to the outcome, and that a thing is interesting in proportion to what depends upon it. When the editorial board of a magazine decide that your story must be rejected because it "lacks story interest" they mean one of two things. First, in regard to plotting, that the definitely hindering crises, either narrative or dramatic are too few or are not definitely enough marked, or that some scenes are not needed. Second, in regard to scene presentation, the readers felt that there was not enough clash.

Keep in mind that every story that is worth writing is the story of character. That person's characteristics make the story interesting. Let character determine the happenings, rather than let happenings determine character. Remember that plotting scenes in the Body of your story really consists of planning scenes in which the character clashes with another character so that a Hindrance to the main narrative-question will result.

A client of mine brought a story. It concerned a girl in a night club. Opposed to her was a woman whose base trait was that she stopped at nothing to secure her purposes. The Hindrance toward which the writer was leading was that the girl should be deprived of an opportunity of acting as hostess. The writer caused the rival woman to go to the manager to protest. The manager overruled her and the girl was in the ascendancy. The fault here was that the character trait of the woman was ignored. She should have been made to wheedle the manager—remember her base trait was that she stopped at nothing to secure her purpose—then not only would her character trait have been consistent, but it would have projected a Hindrance to the main character's purpose.

Never slow up the action of your story. Once you have embarked upon the scenes of the Body, keep conflicts going. When Marshal Foch took command of the whole allied forces during the World War he found existing a peculiar condition. In some parts of the line there was very little fighting by mutual agreement. The sectors were known as "quiet fronts." Instantly he issued an order "No more quiet fronts." That is the order you should give your characters when you push them into the Body of your story.

I have mentioned that the conflicts of each scene will be between the actor and some inner force, or between the actor and some force in nature or environment. Most frequently, however, the scenes will be between two human beings, and will in the majority of the interchanges be oral or spoken clashes. But I want you to keep in mind that every story is built about a Big Scene. The Big Scene is usually the *last scene of the Story.* It is the great final attempt, the last valiant effort of a person facing disaster. So we may say that in the Beginning the Story promises encounters. In the Body these encounters occur; but it becomes apparent in the dramatically powerful story that a moment has come when everything looks black for the chief actor, the only possible outcome seems *disaster.* It is at this moment that you open your Big Scene. In this Big Scene the actor marshals his

resources, either mental or physical, and by a superhuman effort averts the disaster, changing it into triumph. The Body of the Story therefore, in the Story of Accomplishment is a series of interchanges, each resulting in a Hindrance to the Central or Story Purpose, and culminating in a Black Moment. Following this comes the Big Scene. If your Beginning was plausibly presented we will realize that the chief actor has the means or capacity to bring about the Ending. Whether at the close of the Big Scene the chief actor is successful or not depends upon your own conception of the happenings. But that is not a consideration in the Body of your Story. That is a consideration in the Ending. With that we shall deal in the next Lecture.

Problem 18

THE ENDING OF THE STORY

ITS PLOTTING; ITS PRESENTATION

The only fundamental difference in the three major divisions of Beginning, Body, and Ending of the modern Short-story lies in the respective functions of each one. In each division it is very definite. The primary function of the Ending is to present to the reader the Conclusive Act of the whole story, the act which shows that the main character, or a force set in motion by the main character, has answered definitely the main Narrative-Question raised in the reader's mind by the Main Situation presented in the Beginning of the story. After the reader has read the Ending of a story, the uncertainty which existed in his mind during the reading of the Body of the story is at last removed; the final outcome of all the struggles is no longer in suspense; all the foreshadowed conflicts have taken place; the hero has met the opposing forces and clashed with them.

The Ending may contain, although it does not always, a sequel to the Conclusive Act. This Sequel functions for the whole story just exactly as the Fifth Step functions for the scenes within the story. It is in fact, the Fifth Step of the Whole Story. Structurally the story and the scene have the same skeleton, just as an infant and an adult have the same structural frame. The scene bears the same relation to the story that each room does to a complete house. As a matter of fact the architectural analogy between a building and a story is a very good one. Perhaps a short-story resembles most that building in which Barnum and Bailey used to give

their show in the early days of their circus. They had different attractions in different rooms of this building, with signs at the dividing doors, so that the crowds would be caused to enter a room by an enticing sign which read "This way to the Grand Exhibition of Trained Monkeys." They would observe the trained Monkeys, and, enticed by another sign "This way to the Great African Elephants," they would proceed to the next room. Everything worked finely, with a single exception. After the crowd had seen all the attractions, there was no way to get them outside, so that new customers could be accommodated. Finally, some bright person hit upon a scheme. At the end of the building he caused doors to be cut, which opened upon the outer alley, and over this doorway, which seemed exactly similar to all the others, he erected a sign which read: "This way to the Grand Egress." The scheme worked.

In the final Scene of a story the reader should have his curiosity enticed exactly as in the other scenes; but at the close of it, he should find himself outside of the story.

This would be all very simple if it were not for the sequel—the Fifth Step of the story. The writer owes it to the reader to catch up all loose ends. He also desires to extract from the story every significance he wishes. This significance may be a moral significance, or an ironic significance. It may be the significance to the character, or it may be a general significance. It may show, as in the case of Soapy in "The Cop and the Anthem" (See Case No. 2 in the Case Book) that although Soapy has succeeded in the things he set out to do, at the moment when success has crowned his efforts, he does not want that success.

It may show, as in the case of Mr. Trimm, (See Case No. 5 in the Case Book), that at the close of the story, when Mr. Trimm has abandoned his attempt finally, he no longer regards as important the getting rid of the handcuffs. These are both cases of ironic significance, in which there is an actual reversal of the original Situation.

In "Spare Parts" (See Case No. 3 in the Case Book) there

is a general or moral significance to be drawn by a reader from the happenings of the story. It is the old Moral of the old-fashioned story, a sort of lesson to be learned from a consideration of what has taken place. On lines 1469 to 1475 Sally is caused to say:

> "You know as well as I do, that any man who could bring an orphan Vindix over the road from Los Angeles to St. Louis won't have any trouble overcoming the minor obstacles of life."

In "Jake Bolton, 551," Captain Graham, on line 61 of the Beginning, says "I go by a man's eyes; that man has character enough in those straightforward eyes of his to live down any bad name he can ever acquire." Later in the story, in the very closing lines, he says again to the Lieutenant to whom he had been speaking at first, "Remember now what I said to you once about the man's eyes."

This is the moral significance, or the lesson to be drawn, from the happenings by the reader.

In "Sunk," by George F. Worts (See Case No. 6), the ironic significance of the Ending is that in refusing to take a drink, Jason Terwilliger has actually killed Jake Finch, because Jake Finch is the generic title given to any personality who, in the words of Frisco Purdy, "doesn't amount to a damn." It is the Jake Finch inside of Jason Terwilliger, craving drink, whom Jason has killed by his refusal.

In this case, the significance and the conclusive act are combined with extraordinary effect. The reader is left with the same sense of suddenly realizing that what he took for a door leading into another exhibit, was really the doorway to the Grand Egress.

In "Once and Always," by John P. Marquand, (See Case No. 8), the significance is a general significance, that a person who is once a sucker, will always be a sucker; and that if you wish to bend such a person to your will, you must approach him with a sucker's bait.

In "The Face in the Window," by William Dudley Pelley, (See Case No. 9), the ironic significance is that what the murderer, Hap Ruggam, took to be the ghost of Mart Wiley, the man whom he had murdered, was in reality an easily explained natural visitation, thus:

> "And on the snow outside under the window they came upon a black porcupine about the size of a man's head which, scenting food within the cabin, had climbed to the sill, and after the habit of these little animals whose number is legion all over the Green Mountains, had required fifteen bullets pumped into its carcass before it would release its hold.
>
> "Even in death its quills were raised in uncanny duplication of Mart Wiley's pompadour."

This Fifth Step of the Story, the Sequel, may contain matter which is not concerned with the significance at all. "The Face in the Window" is an example. That portion of the story which shows Sheriff Crumpitt entering the Post Office and receiving the letter with the check for the reward is just Sequel. It has nothing especially to do with the significance, except in so far as it refers to the sheriff's interpretation of the happenings as one of the Lord's miracles.

In "The Adventure of Ulysses," lines 426 to 427 are sequel. At the close of line 425, we know that Ulysses has succeeded. But the balance of the story is concerned with showing the reader the effect of the happenings upon the actors.

In "The Cop and the Anthem," the story proper closes on line 444, when the reader learns that Soapy has succeeded in getting himself arrested. The Sequel is action which takes place subsequently to that conclusive act. It is the conclusive act of an interchange in the Police Court the next morning.

In "The Escape of Mr. Trimm," the story proper is over when on lines 2228 to 2231 Mr. Trimm surrenders himself to the Chief of Police. The sequel is in the lines 2232 to 2237 that follow. (See Case No. 5).

In "Spare Parts," (See Case No. 3), the story is over when the reader is aware of the conclusive act which makes clear that Monte English has succeeded in bringing the car across the continent. This occurs on line 1436–1440, "The wedding march was just beginning when they arrived." The balance of the story, lines 1441 to the end, are the sequel.

There are four stories in the Case Book which are stories of Accomplishment, which in this discussion of sequels I have not touched upon so far, for a special reason. They are "Sunk," by George F. Worts, (Case No. 6); "Paradise Island," by Will Payne, (Case No. 7); "Jake Bolton, 551," by John Gallishaw, (Case No. 4); and "Once and Always," by John P. Marquand, (Case No. 8). I shall now deal with them, although before doing so I shall ask you to consider the basic technical problem which they illustrate.

Just as in the Beginning of the Story there are two methods of presenting the Explanatory Matter and the Situation, the Chronological, or the Flash-Back, so in the Ending of the Story there are two methods of presenting the conclusive act. "Western Stuff" and "Paradise Island" illustrate one method, the one in which there is no Sequel. In that type story, when the reader of the story is made aware of the Conclusive Act of the final interchange, he knows the whole story. This type of Ending is called the Contained Ending. There is a Big Scene.

In "Jake Bolton, 551," on the other hand, the story proper is over when Jake Bolton after throwing the bomb has his name taken by the officer. The sequel is the episode between the Captain and the Lieutenant, from which the reader learns the outcome.

In "Once and Always," the sequel is the scene between Gideon Higsbee and his wife in which she tries to impress upon him that he was wrong in supposing Lemuel Gower not to be a smart business man.

The Endings of "Jake Bolton, 551," and of "Once and Always" are examples of Appended Endings.

The difference between a Contained and an Appended End-

ing is this: In the usual story of Accomplishment, the main actor sets out to accomplish some purpose. In so doing he encounters certain forces, or certain conditions which raise obstacles in the path of his success. At last he reaches a point where Disaster seems imminent. In the story with the Contained Ending, he makes another attempt, which is *shown* to the reader. For example, in Mary Brecht Pulver's story, "Western Stuff," the reader sees the woman roping and tying her husband. It is a Big Scene.

In the story with the Appended Ending, on the other hand, the reader is not permitted to see the actor making the attempt. In "Once and Always," we learn that Gideon Higsbee has restored the Ten Thousand Dollars to Lemuel Gower. But we do not see him doing it. It is told about by Mrs. Higsbee later.

The Appended Ending is used for Surprise. It is employed when the writer wishes to keep the reader in suspense up to the very last moment.

"Jake Bolton, 551," is especially interesting in this respect. Although we see the conclusive act of the story performed actually by the main actor, we do not realize its significance. In this story the Appended Ending is used to convey the real meaning of a misleading act. The assumption at the close of the bombing scene is that Jake Bolton is forever "in wrong," and has given up his attempts to live down his bad name. In the Appended Ending the reader learns that he has succeeded.

A straight out-and-out chronological sequel of a perfectly clear conclusive act is not an Appended Ending. The Appended Ending is (first) one used to clear up an act which was ambiguous, or (second) to show that an act never before mentioned has taken place. "Jake Bolton, 551" is an example of the first kind, "Once and Always" is an example of the second kind.

In the Contained Ending both the answer to the Minor Narrative Question of the Big Scene and the Major Narrative Question of the whole story are contained in the same

conclusive act. Thus, when Verena Dayson succeeds in roping and tying her husband she answers the minor narrative question and the major one.

When Cora McBride ties Hap Ruggam she answers the minor narrative question of the scene and the major narrative question of the story by the same conclusive act.

In "Jake Bolton, 551," however, the conclusive act of the scene in which Jake Bolton throws back the bomb leaves the reader supposing that Jake Bolton is "in wrong." Not until the conclusion of the interchange between the Captain and the Lieutenant does the reader become definitely aware that the answer to the Main Narrative Question of the Whole Story, "Can Jake Bolton Make Good in the Army?" has been answered in the affirmative.

In "Once and Always," the Scene Narrative Question is "Can Mrs. Higsbee impress Gideon with Lemuel's business ability?" The answer is "No." The Main Narrative Question of the Whole Story is "Can Gideon restore the Ten Thousand Dollars?" The answer to this is "Yes."

In Plotting an Ending for your story, your task is a very simple one. It is merely to determine first if the answer to your Main Narrative Purpose is to be "Yes" or "No."

Having determined this, you plan a conclusive act by which that answer is made clear to the reader.

You then choose between a Contained Ending (A Big Scene) or an Appended Ending (A Revelation) as a means of making this Conclusive Act clear to your reader.

I cannot abandon a discussion of Endings without touching upon the Happy and the Unhappy Ending. The usual distinction between the Happy Ending and the Unhappy Ending in the story of Accomplishment is that in the Happy Ending the Main Actor wins the prize he has set out to win. It may be a reward as in the case of Cora McBride; it may be a bride as in the case of Monte English; it may be a straying husband, as in the case of Verena Dayson; it may be ease of conscience as in the case of Gideon Higsbee; it may be military achievement as in the case of Jake Bolton; it may be

refuge, as in the case of Soapy; it may be safety, as in the case of Dwyer; or it may be freedom, as in the case of Mr. Trimm. What the prize is does not matter. If the actor wins it is Satisfaction; if he does not it is Frustration.

This is ordinarily and simply the formula. But sometimes achievement of Purpose does not bring Satisfaction, as in the case of Soapy and his Ninety Days on the Island. On the other hand, Failure to Achieve Purpose is not always Frustration. You may wish to present the Significance of this apparent contradiction to your readers.

This is similar to the Jake Bolton ending. A contradiction is to be cleared up. You wish to make clear that an apparently unhappy ending is not so in reality. Usually you will append to the conclusive act of your final scene, an episode.

In a story called "Water," by John Galsworthy, which appears in the *Red Book* for October 1924, there is an interesting example of such an appended episode to explain apparent frustration. The Main Narrative Question of the Whole Story is "Can Cursitor, avowedly commercial minded, succeed in discovering water in an Australian desert that will change the whole complexion of the desert commercially, so that he may enrich himself?"

In the final scene Cursitor discovers that the partner who had always sworn that he knew exactly where this water could be found is after all an opium victim, and that the water never existed except in opium dreams. This particular ending is remarkably interesting to the student as illustrating that the so-called happy ending is not at all essential. Here it is stark and dramatic and *pictorial.*

> "Leaning over the topsail of the *Orinoco* three months later, Cursitor watched Vesuvius growing small. He had not raised a penny. The R. W. W. T. (a corporation he had hoped to float) had made no appeal to Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth; and in the light of the Mediterranean sunset red on the water, he could see nothing in front of him."

Now, nothing could be a greater catastrophe to the man who is the main character of "Water" than to see "nothing in front of him." It is decidedly an unhappy ending. It is certainly an artistic ending in the sense that the reader is made to feel that only thus could the story have ended. So and no otherwise. But Galsworthy goes deeper than externals, and in a swiftly moving closing episode points out the deeper significance, shows that this man who appears to have met complete frustration is really not to be pitied at all, that he will go on hopefully and cheerfully chasing will-o-the-wisps.

> "Yes, sir," said a voice, "as I was saying last night, that Basque region simply reeks of metals. If I could raise the money to unwater a mine I know of, not a hundred miles from Bilbao, I could make the fortune of anyone who comes in. There's copper there running up to seventeen and more percent, and easily worked, too!"
>
> Cursitor turned. "Oh," he said. "How did the water get into it?"
>
> They got off together at Gibraltar.

Commercially the Unhappy Ending is not in demand. But Defeat does not always mean Unhappiness, because as the story "Water" illustrates, Defeat does not always mean ultimate Frustration.

The artistic problem which is sure to arise at some time is that you will some day wish to write about a person who was defeated and actually frustrated. If the person frustrated is a villain, the technical answer is to write those scenes as Body scenes of a story about some one else, causing the other person, a desirable one, to triumph over the villain. An example of this is Irvin S. Cobb's story, "The Episode at Pintail Lake," referred to before in the lecture on Point of View.

If the person always frustrated is a wholly desirable person you will find it hard to convince an American audience that such a person could be ultimately frustrated.

Until you become a very great artist indeed, it is wisest to

steer clear of the Unhappy Ending, *if you hope to sell your stories.*

Meanwhile remember that the basic purpose of the Ending of the Modern Short-Story falls into two clearly defined categories:

1. To show the Conclusive Act, which answers the Main Narrative Question.
2. To add whatever significance there may be to this ending, ironic or otherwise, either as an accompaniment to that conclusive act, or in an appended presentation unit, which may be incident, episode, encounter, episodic scene, or dramatic scene; but which is usually an episode.

In the ordinary Story of Accomplishment, the Conclusive Act of the final Big Dramatic Scene will be the Conclusive Act of the whole Story. The Ending of the Story, therefore, since it will occupy only a line or two in presenting this Conclusive Act, takes up little space, even though there is added to it the necessary Explanatory Matter of the Sequel.

You will see, from this, that the less you mystify your reader throughout the Beginning and Body of your Story, the less you will have to explain to him at the close of it. On the other hand, the more you keep concealed from him in the earlier part of your story, the more explanation is needed at the close, and the greater space you will require for your Sequel.

The Ending is made up of the Conclusive Act and of the Sequel. In the Story of Accomplishment they occupy relatively small space, compared with the Beginning and the Body. In the Story of Decision, where the Body is cut down to a minimum, and is frequently omitted entirely, the length must be made up by either the Beginning or the Ending. If it is made up in the Ending, it will usually be in that portion of the Ending which comprises the Sequel. I have gone into this in detail in the analyses of the stories in the section of the Case Book devoted to Stories of Decision.

By this time you have unquestionably come to the conclusion that in general the division of stories is between *narratively interesting* stories, which are usually Stories of Accomplishment, and *dramatically interesting* stories which are usually Stories of Decision. In the first type the interest is held by crises of Defeat or Hindrance in attempts to achieve a Purpose. In the Second type the interest is held by crises of Dramatic Fear, by the Threat of Disaster or Doom. In the Story of Purpose, the Ending can be brought about by a capacity or by a weapon. In the Story of Choice or Decision the Ending must be the inevitable outgrowth of the Main Trend of Character. In the next two lectures we shall deal with the processes of utilizing your material to produce such stories.

Problem 19

BUILDING UP A STORY FROM A CHARACTER

Throughout this course emphasis has been placed upon the necessity of your realizing that every story is and must be a story of what a character does when he or she is confronted with a certain condition or state of affairs. For this reason I have urged frequently that you develop your capacity for observing people in terms of their reactions to the various stimuli of life, in order that from your observation of such reactions you may be able to deduce the trait of character which actuates people at different times. Side by side with this insistence upon your observation and collection of characterizing data, I have bent my efforts toward pointing out to you that a story is made up of presentation units and of plot crises or turning points, and that the basic and chief function of the presentation unit is to show character in action in such a way that the character or characteristics of the actors are made clear to the reader. Above all the characters or actors in your story must appear to be living, breathing people; there must be about their reactions the illusion of reality. The stories which survive are those which depend more upon character than upon plot for their interest.

In order to achieve authenticity in your characterization you must be aware of the qualities necessary for good characterization. One thing must be apparent by now from a study of the preceding lectures of this course: the character traits must be dramatized. In other words The Characters Must be Shown in Action. You will not be successful, however, in developing all the dramatic possibilities in your

actors until you show them acting in such a way that a character trait is definitely disclosed. The important thing to remember in regard to this character trait depiction is that the action itself is not so important in disclosing character as are the traits which inspire the action. For example, it is not sufficient to show a man permitting another one to win a competition when he could have won that competition himself. The important thing is to show the reader just why the man acted in this way. If his reason for so acting was that he wished the other man to have a sense of superiority in order that he might sell him some goods while in this glow of satisfaction, the first man is displaying a very different character trait from that which he would have displayed if his motive had been a desire to help restore his opponent's self-respect.

What will really determine for the reader the character of an actor in your story is the trait of character shown by the actor's response to various stimuli. Two people responding to the same stimulus may, in their responses, be actuated by very different traits of character. Thus in "Once and Always," Case No. 8, lines 71 to 114 show Gideon Higsbee and Lemuel Gower responding to the same stimulus. That stimulus is the appearance of the three strangers. Gideon's response, (lines 95 to 104,) shows shrewdness. Lemuel's response, (lines 108 to 114,) shows the exactly opposite trait of gullibility.

The same person may be actuated by different traits under different conditions. Under such circumstances the normal response is affected by the unusual conditions. The mood of the actor "conditions" or amends the normal response so that instead of usual and expected conduct, the actor displays unusual or unexpected conduct. Lines 1144 to 1508 of "Claire and the Dangerous Man" (Case No. 21) are an illustration. The mood of Claire leaves her off guard, an unusual state for her. On line 1509 she reacts again with normal carefulness. Here you have what the psychologists call a "Conditioned" response. Therefore, if there is any ambiguity in a response, it must be made clear, by an explanation of the trait

dictating it, or of the mood which "conditioned" it. For it is the sum of a person's traits that makes up that person's character.

It is for this reason that observation is very important. If you enter a restaurant, for example, and find that a man wipes the silver with a napkin, the trait shown may be one of suspicion or it may be one of meticulousness. Whenever you are uncertain as to the character trait displayed by a response, the way to check up is to observe the same person responding to other stimuli. For example, you find that the man who has wiped the silver is himself very neat in his clothing, is very meticulous as to just how his napkin is arranged, and who rearranges the dishes when they come to him, you can be pretty sure that the trait which dictated his wiping of the silver is what we would call in colloquial terms "fussiness." On the other hand, if, on observing this man further, you found that instead of such evidence he furnished you with other evidence you would be justified in coming to another conclusion. For instance, if you observed that when he looked at the bill of fare he turned to the waiter and said, "Is that fresh-killed chicken?" and then, "Are those peas out of a can?" and if he kept glancing away from his table toward where his overcoat and hat were hanging, if he totted up his bill when it was brought to him and kept comparing the prices with the prices on the menu you would be justified in saying that he showed, throughout, the trait of suspicion, and that his wiping the silver was another evidence of his suspicions as to the cleanliness of the service.

It is not always easy to select action that will display traits definitely, so it is therefore important that the reader should be made to understand clearly the traits behind any action of your actor which is not in itself clear evidence of that trait. For this reason, analysis is frequently necessary. Yet analysis is not in itself sufficient. Analysis of traits means very little to the reader because there is nothing pictorial about analysis unless supplemented by comparison with some image; and there is therefore no appeal to anything but the reader's intellect.

Fiction, wherever possible, should be a direct appeal to the senses. Appealing to the intellect places all the burden of imagination upon the reader instead of putting it where it belongs, upon the writer. It is an evasion, upon your part, of a difficult portion of your task. The tendency of the less experienced writer is to forget this dual requirement of trait and expression in action. Either he overdoes the analysis, slighting the action, or he omits the analysis which is so frequently necessary to a clear understanding of the significance of the act as it serves to delineate character.

In order, therefore, that you may understand clearly and thoroughly the problem facing you in building up a story from a series of character observations, it is well to pause for a moment to review hastily what we have learned so far in this course. First and foremost, in regard to presentation units, the basic presentation unit is the incident. This incident may be expanded into an episode, an encounter, an episodic scene, or a dramatic scene, or it may be combined with other incidents without becoming any of the other presentation units. Ordinarily these presentation units combine into the four steps of the scene. The fifth step, if properly utilized, will make the reader aware of a crisis in the plot, either dramatic or narrative. In that case it is a plot unit. But every unit, whether plot or presentation, must be made up essentially and fundamentally of a single incident or of a combination of incidents. A term which includes either a single incident or a combination of incidents is the term "happenings." A short-story is a series of arranged "happenings." Characterization, from the point of view of craftsmanship, consists of showing traits of character in presentation units. Those "happenings" are introduced for any one of the three purposes of the artist.

1. To make the reader aware of the background. To give the social atmosphere or setting.
2. To make the reader aware of the actors. To give an impression of actors or to characterize actors in your story.

3. To make the reader aware of turning-points in the plot. To show that a certain narrative or dramatic crisis has been reached.

What I wish you to consider now particularly is the sort of "happening" (incident or combination of incidents) which displays character by showing the trait behind an act, at the same time that it expresses in action the result of this trait in affecting the actor's conduct. Throughout this series of lectures you have been urged to select and file for your reference and use in the writing of stories a number of such happenings. The purpose of this particular lecture is to show you how to approach your material with a view to using it in the production of a story. My design is to show you that in every character, once you have isolated some basic trait, there is inherent at least one story, that even a single character trait is sufficient, as a starting point, for the building up of a short-story just as it might be the starting point for the building up of any work of fiction, long or short. The reason for this is that if you can find the illustration in action of a trait of character you must in presenting it utilize at least an incident, and probably a larger presentation unit.

Once you have isolated a trait, you have the character nucleus for a whole personality. Once you have written a presentation unit, even as small as one as a single incident, you have the structural nucleus for a scene, because while the incident may develop only one of the values—character, setting, or crisis—the addition of the two missing values will make the complete impression that you desire, and structurally you can develop the incident into a complete scene provided that you carry out the four essential steps which are necessary to the structural development of any scene. These steps, you will remember from your study of the previous lectures in the course, are Step 1. The meeting; Step 2. The purpose; Step 3. The interchange; Step 4. The conclusive act. These are made dramatic as well as narrative by your setting forth in Step 1 the condition which foreshadows the imminent possibility of con-

flict by indicating that the main character will meet opposition from the other characters. In the second step the purpose of one is made clear at the same time that the opposition to that purpose by the other is stressed. The third step becomes dramatic by making of the interchange a clash between the character and the opponent, which may be a clash of purposes or a clash of traits, and preferably both. The fourth step is dramatic because for one actor, certainly, the conclusive act must be a defeat.

The initial structural requirement, however, is that you must have as your working material enough incidents to furnish the nuclei for the various scenes. The process is to search through your material, and to select from your store those happenings which disclose the character traits you desire by showing the reaction of an actor in actual speech or actions, and the traits behind such speech or actions.

Let us assume, for a moment, that you wish to show a character whose main trait is unselfishness. Going to your files, you would find there, for example, the following ten reactions which illustrate unselfishness.

1. A young man, clinging to a spar near a wrecked vessel, gives his place to a woman and child at the risk of his own life.
2. A young man sacrifices his own career to help his older brother.
3. An army officer sails to a leper colony to nurse lepers.
4. A man, instead of buying a fur coat for himself, buys one for his wife.
5. A young man, offered promotion in business, arranges for this promotion to go to someone else who needs it more.
6. A young man breaks his engagement, sacrificing his own happiness for that of his mother.
7. A man, in order to restore another man's self-respect, allows that other man to win in a competition.
8. A young man assumes blame for the crime of another.

9. A business man sacrifices profit to help a competitor.
10. A man boards a train, on which he believes is another man he is seeking, for whom he proposes to make a sacrifice.

(The particular ten happenings here used to illustrate unselfishness were handed in to me as the result of a request to a group of writers for happenings illustrating unselfishness. They might just as readily have been taken from the files of a single writer.)

Let us see, now, how you may use these ten illustrations of unselfishness for the purpose of building up a story. You will be helped most by keeping before you always a definite standard of craftsmanship, never losing sight of the artistic and structural requirements of the modern short-story. You propose, in every short-story, to show a character confronted by a main narrative problem which grows out of a condition or state of affairs which is a crisis or turning point—a dramatic moment—in his life. This condition to be interesting and important must foreshadow the imminence of conflict between opposing forces. In the story of Decision these forces are internal. In the story of Accomplishment these forces are external. This foreshadowing of conflict is made clear to the reader in the explanatory matter of setting, characterization, and such involvements as the condition presents. This condition and the narrative problem which it projects form that part of your story which we call structurally the Beginning. It is the mark of a good Beginning that it will present itself to the reader as a narrative problem in such a way that he can readily phrase for himself a main narrative question, which in the case of the story of purpose or accomplishment is "Can the main character succeed in (his purpose)?" In the story of decision this main narrative question becomes, "What will the main character do confronted by this condition?" In order that you may achieve such clarity in presentation it is necessary, before you can go on with your story, that you know first of all your main character.

You must know this main character in such a way that you can portray him so that others will know him in the way you wish him known. You must be able to do this in such a way as to give an impression of the character's appearance in a way which will identify him, and differentiate him from other characters. You must also be able to indicate through characterizing actions, that is, his subtle actions, such as attitude, gesture, and the tone of voice, certain details which will individualize him. When you come actually to characterize him you will be forced to do so through his traits either as they are analyzed thoughts or spoken words or pictorially presented action.

In order to know a character as thoroughly as this it is necessary that you know something of his background, that is, of his heredity and environment, his social, spiritual, and educational world. In other words, you must be able to show what kind of person he is at the moment of writing, and you must be able to indicate forces, both within and without, that have led to his becoming that kind of person. In order that he may be an actuality to your reader, and that that reader may have no difficulty in concentrating upon his character and upon the narrative itself, you will fill in the identifying details of his appearance at the earliest possible moment. Before you can do this for the reader you must have come to some conclusion about the person for yourself. With this in mind, consider carefully the ten examples which you find available for use, in order to discover what sort of person is to be cast for the leading rôle in your story. You become temporarily a casting director.

Examining the ten examples, you find that the actor is plainly a man, because in every case the word man is used to indicate the actor. When you come to determine the kind of man, the first thing we must know about him is his profession or occupation. The only occupations mentioned here are army officer and business man. Between these lies your choice. If you determine to have one or the other your problem is simply to change any incongruous example to make it fit your

purpose. In other words, you change actuality into fiction. Assuming that you choose the army officer, you examine the examples in order to discover whether an army officer could have done without incongruity all those other things which evidence unselfishness. The indications are that he could have done everything shown in all of the examples except example No. 5 and example No. 9. Knowing this, you must do one of two things. Either you must reject completely examples Nos. 5 and 9 or you must change the incongruous portions of these examples to make them fit your needs.

This is the task which faces you all the time as a story writer—selection and rejection, or adjustment of your material to your purposes. That is why you must keep in mind always your artistic purpose. If you can select your examples ready made you are more than usually fortunate, because in most cases writers find it necessary to change the happening in some degree to accord with their artistic purpose. That is why rigidity of mind is so fatal to accomplishment in fiction. Fortunately in this case the change is one which even the most set person could not object to. Example no. 5 which now reads, "A young man, offered promotion in business, arranges for his promotion to go to someone else who needs it more," is very easily changed to fit your story by simply omitting the modification "in business," and making it read, "Army officer offered promotion, arranges for this promotion to go to someone else who needs it more." Example no. 9 on the other hand, is one which, while easily changed to fit, does not contribute, when it is changed, anything new or startling. It is more or less a duplicate of Example no. 2 which says, "A young man sacrifices his own career to help his older brother." And of no. 7 which says, "A man, in order to restore another man's self-respect, allows that man to win in a competition." It is easier then, to reject this particular example entirely. No. 6 "A young man breaks his engagement, sacrificing his own happiness for that of his mother," might also be rejected, since it conflicts in fact with no. 4 which says, "A man, instead of buying a fur coat for himself, buys one for his wife."

In this example the man is shown as married, and in No. 6 he is shown as breaking his engagement. Since these two are incompatible, one must be rejected. It can be either, but we can assume, for the purposes of this illustration that No. 6 is rejected. Now, let us see what we have left. We have a main character, who is an army officer. At some time in his life he has done the things set forth as follows:

1. Army officer, clinging to a spar near a wrecked vessel, gives his place to a woman and child at the risk of his own life.
2. An army officer sacrifices his own career to help his older brother.
3. An army officer sails to a leper colony to nurse lepers.
4. An army officer, instead of buying a fur coat for himself, buys one for his wife.
5. An army officer, offered promotion, arranges for his promotion to go to some other person who needs it more.
6. An army officer, in order to restore another man's self-respect, allows that man to win in a competition.
8. An army officer boards a train on which he believes is another man he is seeking for whom he proposes to make a sacrifice.

That will do to start with. Let us leave our main character for the moment, in order to decide upon the identity of the other actors in the story. Remember we must always keep in mind the necessity for having as few actors as possible in order that there may not be a diversion of interest. We must admit only those actors who are necessary to the working out of the scene of our story. Now let us examine our materials again to determine the other characters who are to have prominent rôles. Who are the possibilities? We have in incident No. 1 "woman and child," incident No. 2 an "older brother," in incident No. 3 no one, in incident No. 4 the army officer's "wife," in incident No. 5 "another man needing promotion in the army," in incident No. 7 now No. 6, "another man with self-respect lost," in incident No. 7 "another man who has

committed a crime," in incident No. 8 "another man on a train."

Let us do now with the characters who are to have prominent rôles just what we have done with the main actor, that is, determine whether the happenings selected fit, and if not, we must make such changes as are necessary. First let us take "another man." Is there anything anywhere which helps to classify him? The only category which so helps is that mentioned in example No. 2 which tells of the main character's older brother. Is there any reason to keep this older brother from being "another man." None whatever. The only other persons left then to be determined are those in examples No. 1, and No. 4. In Example No. 1 you have "woman and child," in Example No. 4 you have his "wife." But assuming that you prefer to have the main actor married, the change here is obvious. You change the woman so that she becomes his wife. Had you retained the original Example No. 6 and rejected the original No. 4, you would have changed the woman in Example No. 1 to his fiancée. Your artistic purpose will determine whether or not you prefer to keep the child in the story. There are two reasons why it is best not to have the child. First, the child is an added character, the space necessary to deal with the child must be deducted, in a story of any given length, from the space available for the treatment of more important actors. Second, and of major importance, is the fundamental desirability of three actors wherever possible. Instantly you have greater scope, because whenever there are three actors, one of them is practically not an actor at all, in the true sense of the word, but is merely a prize for whom the other two actors strive, and you really concentrate upon two actors instead of three with greater effect. In this case, therefore, you would be wise to retain only the army officer, his older brother, and his wife, the wife being the prize. It might be that you would prefer that instead of wife there should be fiancée. This is entirely a question of your own artistic desires. Assuming that you did change this to fiancée, the revised examples would then read thus:

1. Army officer, clinging to a spar, near a wrecked vessel, gives his place to his fiancée at the risk of his own life.
2. Army officer sacrifices his own career to help older brother.
3. Army officer sails to leper colony to nurse lepers.
4. Army officer instead of buying a fur coat for himself, buys one for his fiancée.
5. Army officer, offered promotion, arranges for this promotion to go to his older brother who needs it more.
6. Army officer, in order to restore his brother's self-respect, allows that brother to win in a competition.
7. Army officer assumes blame for the crime of his older brother.
8. Army officer boards train, on which he believes is his older brother, for whom he proposes to make a sacrifice.

Up to now we have been guided in our selection, rejection, or adaptation of the examples before us, by the requirements of interest. Let us now see, with the actors determined upon and their general characterization accounted for, if there is anything in the fact which needs adjustment from the point of view of plausibility. Since our scenes seem to be working, almost inevitably, toward shipboard and a leper colony it is a simple matter to change the words train, in Example No. 8 to ship. One other incongruity appears in Example No. 4. The fur coat might not be considered the most desirable gift for the army officer to buy for his fiancée under the circumstances. It is conceivable of course, that the gift may be one on which the whole action of the story hinges. Yet this is after all a very minor point. Here comes in a question of grading. Anything can be made plausible with sufficient grading. So you will do well to retain this example until you find that it does not fit in with our final plan.

With the examples found satisfactory with regard to interest and plausibility, the next step in writing your story will be determined by your artistic purpose, which will depend largely —if you are a sincere artist—upon your philosophy of life,

upon whether you wish to have your story end happily or unhappily. The first question that occurs to you as a student of the craftsmanship of creative writing is, "How am I to tell, from the happenings at my disposal, whether or not the story should end happily or unhappily?" The answer to this is that nobody can tell but you. It is your story. Technically it will end happily if the main character wins the prize. It will end unhappily if he does not win the prize. In this case the prize is the fiancée, so that if you determine to have your story end happily, you will have to add an example in which it is made clear that the main character has won his fiancée.

All signs have been pointing definitely, so far, to a rivalry between the two brothers for the possession of the fiancée of the main character. You, as author can determine before you write the story, which of these rivals is to be successful. If you determine that the main actor is to lose you have already at hand two examples, either one of which you could use as the nucleus of a scene, which will show that the army officer has abandoned forever his hope of winning the prize. One is No. 3 where he is shown as sailing for a leper colony. The other is No. 1 where he gives his place to his fiancée at the risk of his own life. If, on the other hand, you determine that the story shall end happily, you will need an example of a response which must meet the requirements of being the action either of the main character or of a force set in motion by an action of the main character which shows clearly that the prize has been won. For example, if you wish a happy ending you may cause the fiancée to dismiss the older brother and tell the main actor that she loves him because of something which he has done. In that case you will be bringing about a happy ending by illustrating as a sequel to the Decisive Act of the main actor, the action of a force set in motion by the main actor. In this case the force set in motion is the fiancée.

Assume therefore, that this is the ending upon which you have decided. The happy ending will, therefore, come from the sequel to the conclusive act which shows the decision of

the main character. This can be set down as 11. (Sequel) Fiancée declares love for main actor.

You must determine next the organization of the happenings within your story. The point at which your story begins, the point at which it ends, and the intervening scenes, in which the character is shown in conflict with the various obstacles.

The study of the Case Book will have convinced you that stories fall, almost automatically, into types, and that this story, which is based upon the recurrence, on various occasions, of a definite character trait is a story of parallel decisions, and is a Decision story of the same type as "The Mummy" by John Galsworthy, (Case No. 19). Like "The Mummy" it will be best told in flash-back, that is, with a flash-back Beginning, the main narrative situation presenting itself first, the solution being left in suspense, while the reader is flashed back over a series of similar necessities for decision, all of them decided by a definite character trait.

With this in mind, you must select a decisive act. You may choose either No. 3, the one which shows the army officer about to leave for the leper colony, or you may choose No. 1 which shows him giving up his place on the spar to his fiancée. Let us assume that you have chosen this latter one, in which case it is preferable to amend the happening to "An army officer gives up his place on a spar to his older brother." Now you have a good dramatic ending for a story, and you have also a sequel, (No. 11) which shows that the sacrifice was fortunately not fatal in its termination. Every conclusive act is the answer to some definite narrative question. Such narrative question is raised by the reader *when he becomes aware that the actor is confronted by a problem.*

Your knowledge of craftsmanship will indicate to you that you must write an opening scene showing the army officer facing alternatives. The main Conclusive Act in a story of this type is also the conclusive act of the opening scene. (For a complete understanding of this, study carefully the analysis following Case No. 19.) The simplest way to present this material is to present the necessity for decision and the decision

in a single presentation unit, and at some point divide it in two.

Thus, in one stroke, you will have presented your main problem and your main conclusive act, and you can probably, within the scope of a swift episode, present the sequel. There remains, then, only to present, in between the main problem and the main conclusive act, the other examples as the explanatory matter of the flash-back Beginning, developing each of the happenings into a complete scene. The material so presented will correspond to the material presented in THE MUMMY from lines 51 to 705. In this way you can flash back to the episode of the fur coat; but, in order to add consistency to the record, you can show this sacrifice made, not as in the original incident for the fiancée or wife, but for the older brother. This could even happen in point of time long before either of the young men had joined the army. Or you could start your "flash-back" when they were both in school, and the two were entered in a competition which the main character allowed his older brother to win in order to restore his self-respect. The example which shows the officer sacrificing his own career to help his older brother would be rejected because it is essentially the same as assuming the blame for the crime of his older brother, although it might be retained by making this young man a man who wished to become an artist of some kind and found that the financial strain upon his family would permit only one brother to be educated, in which case he would allow the brother to be sent to West Point, he himself joining the service as a private, and later receiving promotion. Afterward, when they were both in the service he could assume the blame for the crime of his older brother, and could go to the ship seeking his older brother in order to tell him that he has made this sacrifice. In this way, the sacrifice of his career could be dramatized by his offer to go to the leper colony to nurse lepers. In fact that could be the only alternative given to him—that or going to jail in satisfaction of the crime which was really committed by his older brother. Now, if you will look again at the Galsworthy story as it is shown in outline in

the Case Book, you will see that this story falls into a similar outline, thus:

Army Officer having to decide between saving his own life or that of his older brother.	corresponds to lines 1-50 of "The Mummy."
In flash-back presentation units, explanatory matter shows previous choices in similar circumstances.	corresponds to lines 51-705 of "The Mummy."
In Conclusive Act, army officer surrenders place on spar to older brother.	corresponds to lines 706-836 of "The Mummy."
In Sequel, fiancée declares love.	corresponds to lines 835-836 of "The Mummy," which are strictly speaking, a sequel. The Sequel is the fifth step of the *story*.

On page 445 of the Case Book you will find a chart outline of "The Mummy" as it would have appeared had the happenings been presented in their chronological order, which will help to show you just how the Flash-back is accomplished. It is done by writing a complete last scene, just as if you proposed to present it chronologically. Then, instead of presenting it chronologically, you select the moment of the highest dramatic importance, within that scene. You break the scene at this point, presenting the dramatic moment as the first half. The knowledge on the reader's part that the chief actor is facing the necessity for an important Decision or Choice will cause the reader to phrase for himself a Story or Plot Narrative Question: "What course of conduct will the Chief Actor decide upon?"

The answer to this Story Narrative Question is also the answer to the narrative question of the scene. Obviously, if you went ahead and presented the second part of the scene, the Story would soon be over. This is especially so in the Story of Decision or Choice, in which the Body Struggle is usually omitted. Your knowledge of the demands of reader interest and your knowledge of craftsmanship both come to

your aid at this crisis. The first tells you that the interest which the reader feels upon reading the Body of a Story must be supplied even though no such actual unit exists or can exist in your story. The second, your knowledge of craftsmanship, enables you to supply an artificial substitute which will give the reader the same feeling of interest as would a series of scenes in the Body. In this case, though, the scenes so presented will be Explanatory Matter for the Main Story Problem, which the reader must have, in order to understand the importance of the Main or Story Problem *to the chief actor,* and also that he may have some key to the Conclusive Act which will justify it plausibly and artistically. So your sequence, then, becomes

Main Problem.	Presented in first part of Scene, projecting Important Moment in chief actor's life, when the necessity for choice is urgent.
Explanatory Matter.	Presented in a series of dramatic scenes, each concluding with a fifth step, showing actor faced with a choice, not so important, but similar to that of the Main Problem.
Conclusive Act.	Presented in the remainder of the scene which presents the Main Problem, and which has been interrupted by the Flashback for Explanatory Matter.
Sequel.	You may desire to present a sequel; or it may develop that no Sequel is necessary, because all questions of fact or significance are answered definitely in the Conclusive Act itself.

It is conceivable that you may desire to present this material as a story of a Single Decision, instead of presenting it as a Story of Parallel Decisions. "The Mummy" is a story of Parallel Decisions. So is "The Roads We Take." So is

"Rich Man—Poor Man." On the other hand "Women Are Wiser" is a story of a Single Decision. So is "Shoddy."

The SINGLE DECISION story is of two types. In the first the Decision is made, practically without reflection, or at least immediately upon weighing the possibilities. "Women Are Wiser" is of this type.

In the second type, the chief actor is about to make a decision of one kind, when a new stimulus is brought to his attention. He then reverses his original decision. "Shoddy" is an example of this type.

The most important principle which you can absorb from a study of this Lecture is that the Story of Decision, whether Single or Parallel must have a series of convincing SCENES. In writing this type of story, more than elsewhere, you must know how to present the character of the actors in a series of well constructed and convincing scenes. That is why I urge you again to SEE YOUR STORIES AS A SERIES OF SCENES.

Problem 20

BUILDING UP A STORY FROM A PARTIAL PLOT OR FROM A THEME

Three general classifications may be made for stories. They must, always, be considered as very general and very flexible. They are not exclusive of the others. The first classification is: Stories that spring from character traits of individuals. The second is: Stories that could be told with different people in the chief rôle. The third is: Stories in which the interest is chiefly in the significance of the story. An example of the first category is the story "Once and Always"; and another is "The Mummy." An example of the second category is "Spare Parts." In the first two stories cited the conclusion was brought about by a definite and individual trait of the chief actor. In these stories the individuality of the actors determined the story. In "Spare Parts," on the other hand, the chief actor was not, nor did he need to be, very definitely individualized. Monte English was a flat character; the others, Gideon Higsbee and Eugene Gaunt were more rounded out. An example of the story in the third category is "Rich Man—Poor Man." The interest is not so much in the actors as in the significance of the conclusions reached by two different men, a conclusion which was in each case erroneous, because of the evidence of the other case. It may be said that "The Mummy" and "The Roads We Take" combine the distinctive quality of the first and last categories. The reader is interested in both the character traits and the significance.

When we talk about a story having significance we mean,

ordinarily, that there is some lesson to be learned from a reflection upon it. For example the significance of "The Roads We Take" and "The Mummy" is that people's actions at all important crises of their lives are determined by their dominant traits of character. The significance of "Rich Man—Poor Man" is that people often come to conclusions, about the causes of conditions, which seem to them sound, but which must appear to the unbiased observer to be unsound. We often talk of this significance as the "theme" or "thesis" of a story. I mention this now, in order that I may dwell briefly upon the story growing out of a theme, or more properly speaking, of the problem which confronts you when you, as creative writer, feel a certain conviction, and wish to write a story about that conviction. Through a story, you feel, you may communicate this conviction, pleasantly, to a large group of readers. What creative process goes on, in a general way, while you are casting this into a story?

Two methods suggest themselves at once. Significance is what you are primarily interested in; but it must be communicated through a story. You know that the Story of Decision or Choice is ordinarily more significant than the Story of Accomplishment. The first method, then, is to present your material as a story of Decision. Your theme may be that man cannot escape from his environment because he doesn't really want to escape. If you decide to present your material as a Story of Decision you will bear in mind that the Story of Decision varies from the Story of Accomplishment in a very clear and marked way. The Story of Accomplishment is the story of someone trying to bring about the fulfilment of a wish. The Story of Decision shows someone who can realize the fulfillment of a wish. He has only to say "Yes," and the wish is fulfilled. You would therefore present the chief actor at a moment when the thing he had always wished for was within his grasp. This would form the Main or Story Situation. It would cause the reader to ask himself a Story Narrative Question "What will the chief actor do, now that he has a chance to escape from the environment which he has always

loathed?" You would then, if you had not done so previously, present the antecedent action showing the overwhelming growth of the wish to escape. This would be the Condition or State of Affairs, constituting the Explanatory Matter of the Main Plot Problem. It could be presented either chronologically, before the Main Problems, or in Flash-back, after the reader had been made aware of the Main Problem. Finally you would show by a Conclusive Act that the Chief Actor had refused to avail himself of the opportunity to escape. You would append as a Sequel the explanation that he no longer wished to escape.

The second method would be to treat the story as a Story of Accomplishment, allowing the significance to emerge as an unexpected ironic reversal of the original situation. In that case you would present the Basic Condition as being different from the Basic Condition of the Story of Decision. Whereas in the first rendering the chief actor would be presented at the moment when Wish Fulfillment was possible, in this new rendering you would present the character at the moment when it becomes evident that Wish Fulfillment is a vague and distant possibility, only. You would then set out to make clear, through episodes, encounters, or scenes, or some combination of those presentation units, just what manner of man was the chief actor, the qualities of the environment which made him desire to escape from it, the urgent necessity to attempt such escape, and the capacity of the chief actor which made such escape a possibility. In that way you would present both the Main or Story Purpose of the Plot, and the Explanatory Matter of the Condition.

To make this a dramatically interesting story you would emphasize the Difficulties the chief actor would have to overcome before such escape could be accomplished; you would indicate that there were definite and tangible forces at variance with the actor's purpose; and you would also make clear to the reader that the *chief actor* considered the necessity for escape to be of paramount importance. In that way the reader would be made to believe that failure was tantamount to

Disaster. Up to this point you would be writing the Beginning of your Story. From that point on, you would be writing the Body.

The Body would be made up of scenes developing the opposition which, you pointed out to the reader, in the Beginning of the Story, was bound to occur. Each one of these scenes would be dramatic; and in each one the character of the different actors would be emphasized and rounded out as much as possible.

The story "The Escape of Mr. Trimm" might well serve as a model. This is the story of an attempt to escape, which ironically concludes in a failure. The chief actor does not, in the end, desire to escape. Just as in this story the attempts of Mr. Trimm to escape are frustrated, it is almost certain that in a story such as the one suggested, there would be a number of attempts; during which the attitude of the chief actor toward his Central Purpose would undergo a gradual and subtle change. The Sequel would show the ironic reversal of that original attitude. "The Cop and the Anthem" is also an example.

The Ending of the story would be a conclusive act showing that the attempt had been successful or had been abandoned. Following this Conclusive Act, and forming part of the Ending, would come the Sequel. From this Sequel the reader would learn that the attitude of the chief actor toward his original Purpose which had given the story its narrative unity had changed so completely as to be completely reversed.

This is sufficient, I trust, to enable you to see that the significance of a story may be extracted in two ways. One, through a Decision Story, from the Conclusive Act. Two, in an Accomplishment Story, from the Sequel. Here, again, we find further proof of the necessity for mastering the method of convincing scene presentation. The Conclusive Act and the Sequel, upon which you depend for the Significance of your story built up from a Theme or Thesis is such a small portion, proportionately, of the whole story, that no amount of skill in presenting that small portion of your story would

compensate for inability to present interesting and convincing scenes in the Beginning and in the Body.

Almost anybody can learn to present scenes that will fit into the Body of a story; the bare fact that clearly differentiated characters clashing over a very ordinary and common purpose will develop into such a scene through four simple steps, makes this a comparatively easy process. In its fifth step it is a Hindering Crisis in the Narrative of the Main or Story Purpose; or if it is not, the reader's suspense can be heightened by implying that this is one of many similar scenes each of which will present an encounter at least as interesting, and probably more interesting than the one the reader has just been privileged to read. Also, once a reader has committed himself so far as to read the first scene of the Body, it is more than probable that he will continue to read the rest of the attempts of the chief actor to bring about a purpose. This will be the case, particularly, if you as an author have enlisted his sympathy for the chief actor, have made him feel that he wishes to see the chief or central purpose of the actor realized, and also if you have caused him to wish to see the villain frustrated.

Also it is obvious that if your reader reads through to the last of the scenes in the Body of your story, he will read the Ending of your story. His ordinary curiosity will lead him to read a sequel even if he disapproves of the conclusive act. He will do this because he finds the conclusive act not quite plausible and hopes to find in the sequel an explanation; or because he believes the conclusive act occurred, but he doesn't quite understand how or why. At any rate, it is safe to say that the Body and the Ending of almost any story are much more easy to render than is the portion we call the Beginning, containing not only the Central Purpose of the chief actor, but the Explanatory Matter which sets forth the Condition or State of Affairs which precipitated that Central Purpose and brought it about.

It is the presenting of this Explanatory Matter which offers the greatest challenge to your craftsmanship. Upon the proper presentation of this portion of your Beginning depends

the reader's acceptance of your whole story. Such-and-such a kind of man finds a certain Condition or State of Affairs exists. These two factors must be made clear to the reader. First he must be *shown* the kind of man whose reaction to the Condition precipitates the Central Purpose. In order to do this effectively for him you must have the capacity to observe in terms of art, and in terms of fiction; and besides you must be able to record in those terms.

When I speak to you about recording in terms of art, I mean that you must have the ability to transfer an impression. Before you can hope to transfer this impression, you must be able to observe this impresison. You must observe always with the thought in mind of recording later. The average person *sees*. You must do more than this. For example here is what happens when two people see a man plowing.

The non-artist mentioning it later, says: "Curtis Jones was plowing his lower meadow this afternoon." The fact is all that he has carried away with him. Now, with the artist this is all different. He is aware of the lighting conditions, the streaks of sun, the shadow of clouds, the smell of new-turned earth, the rattling of the horses' harness, the soft clucking noises the farmer makes to them, if he is a kindly disposed man, or the shouts with which he urges them forward if he is an impatient man. He will observe and remember the shiny steel of the plowshare, the little clots of earth that stick to it, the black marks of sweat under the horses' collars that disfigure their whitness,—if they are white—and a hundred other details of sense appeal that have gone unheeded by the non-artist.

What the artist does for the non-artist is to make him aware consciously of those details which were present, but which he was aware of only sub-consciously. He brings to the surface of the reader's consciousness many things that the reader had forgotten about. Artist and non-artist all *see* the same things. In the consciousness of the non-artist they are pushed aside or buried by other considerations. They are all-in-all to the artist.

But it is not sufficient to be an artist. You must be an

artist in terms of fiction. Fiction is concerned with art, and has its basis in art. Its chief concern is with CHARACTER.

Character in fiction is the response of a person to a stimulus in such a manner as to display a trait of character. Thus, it is not enough for you to tell us that Curtis Jones is twenty-eight, with a big barrel-like chest, and sun-browned muscular arms, and that his mouth and chin were the typical Yankee mouth and chin, but that his forehead was wide and smooth and his eyes had none of the hard shrewdness of the typical Yankee farmer. That is only an indication of his character from details of his appearance. What we want to know about him is that part of his character which is not easily deduceable from a single glance at his appearance.

What the reader should be told is something quite different from this. You will not omit a description. In fact, the more often you can emphasize details of his appearance, the more real will be the impression; because you will be dealing with factors with which the reader is quite familiar. But you will pick out the significant responses of Curtis Jones. You will, at the earliest possible moment bring him into contact with some other person. This other person can be a salesman for shrubs; he can be a rival of Curtis's for the favor of the daughter of some neighboring farmer. Preferably he will be a person with some purpose opposed to that of Curtis Jones. As soon as you get the two of them together you have begun to record in terms of fiction.

The chief value of recording in scenes is the PLAUSIBILITY of such rendering. In appealing to a non-artist your best approach is through factors which he will recognize. He will accept a scene as plausible; because *life is full of scenes.* He does not have time to stop and listen to all the dramatic scenes that are going on about him in his daily life, because the demands of existence urge him on to something more insistent and immediate. But in reading a story, he is, presumably, at leisure, free to devote himself exclusively to the scenes which you present to him; and particularly interested in the closely knit pattern of those scenes. In that respect

fiction varies from life. The fiction writer must know how to interpret character. He must realize that there is a behavior pattern for the individual. From the behavior of a certain actor, this Curtis Jones, for example, over a period of time, he can predict his behaviour at great moments of his life.

In addition to this there is a Hidden Life of the actor which the writer of fiction must be able to build up from the observable detail. He must be able to invent and project happenings that will bring this hidden life into focus. He must place a magnifying glass and an X-Ray upon his actor's character. Especially he must be able to show to the non-observant, the motives behind the acts of people in his story.

To each human being there are two sides. The first is the exterior side. His observable behaviour is exterior. But there is in addition an interior side. It is a romanceful side. It is made up of dreams, of longings, of joys, and sorrows, and fears, and secret angers and protests, of mental conflicts between desires and the repressive side of his nature. Only under stress of great emotion will a person confess the possession of such an interior side—or when softened by some mood of self-expression. He may be deterred by a sense of fitness, by shyness, by shame, or by inarticulateness. Curtis Jones, plowing his rocky hillside farm in Central Vermont, may be dreaming of tropic skies, or coral atolls, of the throbbing of engines in some giant liner, of the spray in his face from the wash of a schooner's bows—or he may be figuring the profit from two hundred and fifty hens, if grain can be bought at half a cent a pound cheaper. He may be planning to elope with the daughter of the neighboring farmer, or he may be working out the final details of a murder he plans to commit; or he may be broken with grief at the death of some one he loves deeply; or he may be merely wondering when the big bell will sound that is the signal for him to bring the horses back to the stable and begin his daily "chores." But it is first necessary that you make him exist for the reader as a human being.

It may be easiest to call in "character witnesses" who will discuss him; or you may offer as evidence the common belief of the neighborhood that Curtis is "sot in his ways, but straight as a string." You may bring evidence to prove that the boys at the billiard room in town all vote him "a good scout" or that they think him "a hick." You may even bring conflicting evidence, and then by showing his thoughts, and speech, and actions confound this evidence. But this will only be establishing certain traits of character. It will be only the introduction to your story. You must also present the Condition to which this young farmer is to respond.

For example in establishing a trait of character you may bring on a character witness in the form of a neighboring farm boy, who was in the same regiment with Curtis during the war. You may cause the interchange to show that Curtis had kept the boy from harm, and that he had prevented him from being exploited by some crooks, after the Armistice. In the course of the conversation you will bring out that Curtis is shy and practically inarticulate; but that he is roused by injustice, and particularly by exploitation. At such times he loses his shyness in a rush of indignation and in a desire to save a victim. You then dip into the secret recesses of the mind of this young farmer and show that he is in love with a certain girl; but you show also that he worships her from afar, never dreaming that she would even consider him as a husband. With these factors presented to the reader, he understands the character of the chief actor. Now established as a character, he can become an actor in your story. But you will do well to ponder upon the capacity which he will need to bring about the accomplishment of any purpose. Characterization consists of *qualities* and *capacities*.

Just as soon as you begin to consider *capacities* you must determine what capacities are necessary. In other words, you must determine two other factors. One is the Condition or State of Affairs, the other is the Purpose. You may determine that the Condition unfolded to him by the young farm boy who has come is that a certain crook is setting his cap at

the girl; and that both of these men know that the girl may be swept off her feet by this crook, and be made very unhappy. You therefore plant in your character some quality which will be able to prevent this. It may be a physical quality, it may be an ability to bluff a crook; it may be an ingeniousness in turning unpromising moments into moments of success. But whatever it is it will be available to you as *the result of observed responses.* You may borrow from a chauffeur in New York City a trait to be used for this farmer from Central Vermont. That is the point at which you cease to be an artist and become a *fiction writer.* You are then adapting your material to the needs of your medium. It is then that your notebook or filing system comes to your aid.

It is obvious that the Purpose of the chief actor, Curtis Jones will be to save the girl from being exploited by these crooks or by some individual crook. So you have the factors. An Actor possessing certain characteristics. A Condition calling upon the actor for a certain response. The response in terms of a definite Central Purpose. These presented will become dramatic by the indication that in order to bring about that purpose the chief actor must overcome difficulties, must encounter opposing forces, and must be brought face to face with imminent disaster. This moment of imminent disaster will project the Conclusive Act of the story. You may then, having caused the farmer to save the girl, reward him by giving him the girl.

What I am particularly interested in pointing out to you now is that the plot of a story is dependent upon Crises. When you have established a character and presented a condition you have not even a *partial plot.* On the other hand, as soon as you make that actor respond to that condition in terms of a Purpose or problem, you have a plot. I have shown you how a story of Decision may be built up from a Character Trait; so now I shall confine myself to the story of Purpose or Accomplishment built up from a *partial plot.*

More and more as you become expert you become convinced that plotting and presentation cannot be divorced. You will

come to the realization that the Plot of a Story is the pattern of its Crises. But you will also become aware that these crises are the *fifth step of scenes or presentation units.* Therefore, every time you write a scene, you can make out of it a *partial plot* by making clear to the reader, *through the fifth step* the crisis of the plot. These crises may be dramatic or they may be narrative. If they are narrative they will be PURPOSE, FURTHERANCE, HINDRANCE, CONCLUSIVE ACT. If they are dramatic they will foreshadow CONFLICT TO OVERCOME A DIFFICULTY, CONFLICT TO OVERCOME AN OPPOSING FORCE, CONFLICT TO AVERT DISASTER.

It is therefore of the highest importance that you learn to think in terms of scenes and crises. The scenes may often be incomplete, they may even be episodes or incidents. What is essential in rendering them in terms of fiction, is that you shall make clear to the reader that they result in Crises. In that way you will acquire the necessary conception of what a plot really is. *It is a pattern of crises growing out of presentation units.* If you have one part of the pattern, you can add, or develop, or invent the other parts. Or, if you so desire, you can file away the partial plot to be developed or added to later.

Here is how the process works. You may observe a scene, an oral encounter between two clerks in the same office. It will be animated by one of the narrative purposes listed on page 5 of the Case Book. One clerk will be trying to persuade the other to adopt a course of conduct, or trying to secure information, or will be trying to impress the other with his importance or perhaps with his lack of authority to do a favor which the other believes possible, or will be trying to convince the other that some condition exists which is dangerous; or you may show, even, that the oral combat has degenerated or developed into a physical encounter. But, having selected one of those purposes for one of the clerks, you will develop the encounter between them, to such a point that it will become clear to the reader that the clerk has either won his point or abandoned it. Thus, assuming that clerk A

wants to secure information from the manager's stenographer as to what was said in the manager's report about the clerk's ability and desirability, he will be shown attempting despite opposition, to draw out the stenographer.

Eventually you will show that the interchange has come to a conclusion, and that the clerk has secured his information, or has given up the attempt. So far you have been presenting a scene. Now comes the step that counts in the PLOT. You present the effect upon the actors of that step. Your point-of-view will be that of one of the actors. Supposing you have decided that the point-of-view is that of the clerk, who is very ambitious. He may be planning to propose to a certain girl if he is sure of getting an increase. In the course of the interchange between him and the manager's stenographer it may develop that the stenographer tells him that if he will take her to a movie that evening she will type in a good report, but that if he doesn't, she will type in a bad report. He, having no finesse, but being blunt and honest, spurns the offer, whereupon the stenographer, tossing her head angrily, hurries into the manager's office, where she begins vindictively banging at the keys of her typewriter, glancing maliciously at him as her fingers fly over the keys. *His analyzed thoughts* form the important PLOT STEP of the scene. Her hurrying away is also part of the fifth step. But in turning this presentation unit into a Partial Plot, it is his *analyzed thoughts* or his *spoken words* or his *clearly indicative actions* that count.

Reflecting upon what has passed he may think: "There's somebody who'll upset my applecart, if I don't watch out"; and thereupon he determines that before he could hope for success, he must make sure that she was rendered harmless. But even as he made up his mind, he realized that she was no easy opponent; for she possessed a guile beyond her years, the ability to disguise it; and was entirely unhampered by any scruples as to the weapons she used or the ethics of using them. In that case you have indicated through the fifth step, THE PROMISE OF CONFLICT WITH AN OPPONENT. In doing so,

the device you used was analysis of thoughts. You may, if you wish, cause him to voice this opinion to someone else, in which case you will employ spoken words rather than thoughts. You might cause him, for example to go over to another clerk, and ask him how powerful this girl is in the counsels of the manager. When this clerk assures him that she is all-powerful, he can whistle dolefully, and say, "Well, then, I've sure made myself a nice little enemy."

It may be that the device you will use to show this crisis of dramatic foreshadowing of conflict will be the *actions* of the actor. You may cause the clerk to go to his desk, and to extract from a locked drawer a little note book, containing two lists, one headed "friends," the other headed "enemies." Very elaborately, he will cross the girl's name off the list of "friends," and write it in under the heading "enemies."

It doesn't matter which of these devices you employ. Any will do. The point I wish to make is that the employment of any one will serve. It will add a PLOT or FIFTH STEP to the scene. Out of the scene will emerge the characteristics of the actors.

It may develop that this is the opening scene of your story, in which case this will be a dramatic crisis in the Beginning, with no Story Purpose announced. It may develop that a Story Purpose has already been announced, and that you have previously indicated that in order to achieve it, the clerk must win the sympathy and assistance of the management, particularly that of the stenographer. If such is the case, the Plot Crisis of the scene we have discussed is a Hindrance in the Body of the Story, and the scene itself, between the clerk and the stenographer, is a scene in the Body: one of the attempts to bring about the accomplishment of the actor's purpose.

It may develop, on the contrary that from this scene you wish to make the Main or Story Purpose emerge. In that case, when the young man sees the stenographer sweep away in angry defiance, he will reflect, and his reflections will take

the form of coming to a determination that he will begin now to place himself in a position where he will be forever free from dependence upon the whim of a stenographer for his promotion. So thinking, he will realize that this is a general purpose, and this general purpose will crystallize into something concrete and limited. It may be that he knows that above everything else the management wants to secure some key lots in a real estate development. He may determine to secure the option upon those lots for the company for whom he works. In that case the Scene has resulted in a Narrative Crisis of Purpose. As he thinks over this, however, he sees how difficult it is going to be. He may even announce his determination to a friend, who will point out the difficulties lying in his way, the dangerous opposition he will be sure to encounter, and the certainty that he will be left without a job and branded as a failure if he does not accomplish his purpose. In that way you have presented in *two* scenes (one the scene between him and the stenographer), the other scene between him and his friend, all the *necessary crises* for the Beginning of a Story. From then on, you develop from a partial plot, a complete story, by developing the conflicts promised in the *crises* of the Beginning, into complete dramatic scenes for the Body, and presenting, eventually, a Conclusive Act, and if you so desire, a Sequel.

If you write a scene in which you say that at the close the clerk knew that now, having defied the all-powerful stenographer, he is out of a job and poor and certainly forever blasted in reputation, you can make this fifth step a sequel to the Conclusive Act of the Scene, which is his refusal to accede to her request.

In such a story of course, there will have been a good deal of preparation upon your part which will make clear to the reader, earlier in the story, that this refusal is a Symbolic and important Act, and that it marks the close of the Struggle of the chief actor to bring about a central purpose. For the reason that you may wish to have a happy as opposed to an unhappy ending you may write a Sequel showing that the stenographer

had an undying loyalty to her employers, and that in their interests she recommended the clerk upon the grounds of his being untemptable, etc.

Any crisis of the Story may be taken as the point of departure for building up a story from a partial plot. It is essential that in developing your plot sense you come to a complete realization that *a partial plot is any presentation unit, plus any crisis.* Given that, you can develop the missing values. All that you need is an outline of the presentation unit and its plot crisis. You will know, for example, that if at the close of a scene a Central Purpose is apparent, there will be raised in the consciousness of the reader a Plot or Story Narrative Question. This question, "Can A succeed in accomplishing (a certain definite purpose)?" will have only one of two answers. This answer will be "Yes, he can" or "No; he fails." Thus, having found a Beginning Purpose, you automatically secure a Conclusive Act for the Ending. In between you present a Body, made up of scenes, each an attempt to bring about a purpose, each having as its fifth step a crisis of Hindrance either dramatic or narrative, and all cumulatively dramatic because of what the reader knows about what has happened in the preceding scenes.

You know, also that every time a person does something it is a Conclusive Act in respect to some question. If it is an important turning point in his life, it is in all probability an answer to a Main or Story Narrative Question. In such a case you build up your story backward. This does not mean that you *present* it to your reader backward. You determine the question to which the Conclusive Act, and perhaps a Sequel attached to it, is the answer. From that point on you go ahead as if you were building up from a Beginning.

It is also possible that your partial plot may consist of a dramatic scene, which you judge should belong in the Body of a story. If so you write a *fifth step* for it which will indicate that the chief actor is *in wrong.* When an actor is "in wrong," he has met a Hindering Crisis in respect to some purpose. Thus, as soon as you have established a dramatic

scene with a fifth step of Hindrance you have again a Partial Plot. Remember, always, that the smallest unit which you may regard as a partial plot is a presentation unit, plus a fifth step of crisis. Once you have built back from this Body Crisis to the Beginning Purpose you can go ahead just as if you had started from the Beginning.

I should like you to make a special effort to grasp the importance of the fifth step of a scene in conveying to the reader the dramatic quality of the Plot. Do not confuse this with the dramatic quality of the Scenes, which comes from the clash of forces in the interchanges. What I mean is the effect of the happenings upon the actor, as they affect the possibility of ultimate success or failure.

From the very opening scene the *feelings of the actor* determine the dramatic quality of the plot. If a hindrance does not seem to him to be a hindrance, in all likelihood it is not a hindrance. His feelings or reflections at the close of each scene will be a barometer of dramatic intensity. It is possible, of course, in the objectively presented story to have the author present this fifth step. This is the case in "Jake Bolton, 551," wherein the dramatic quality of the plot is pointed out by the author. The chief actor is not aware of the high-points. He is not given to reflection, but to action. His processes are direct, and therefore can be translated directly into speech or action. But such material does not offer itself readily. For the most part you will have to fall back upon analysis of the actor's reflections as a device for making clear the dramatic intensity of those moments when the actor at the close of a Body scene is "in wrong." Particularly is this so when you are dealing with a complex character.

It is possible, in some cases, to sift in this analysis throughout the interchange. The more of it you can include in that way, without clogging the action, the less there will remain to be presented at the close of the scene in a fifth step, and the more swiftly and uninterruptedly you can go on with the next scene. This sifting in will give greater plausibility to the interchange, because it will explain, frequently, the motive

for a speech, or act, or change of appearance that would otherwise cause the reader to accept it less readily. For that fleeting moment the thread of illusion would be broken for him.

The prime importance of creating an illusion of reality cannot be too strongly emphasized and reiterated. Technical proficiency includes this ability as well as the ability to observe and arrange your material. Everything depends upon creating actors with whom your readers can sympathize; for in order to become interested in an actor's struggle, the reader must understand just what kind of person that actor is, and the importance to him of the purpose or problem. A reader may not be at all interested in the purpose of an actor, as an abstract interest, but he may be intensely interested in desiring that that special actor may succeed in bringing it about.

He may not be a person who would seek to win the prize that the actor seeks to win; but he may, because of his sympathy for the actor, hope most heartily that the actor will win it. He might not himself feel any thrill of fear or defeat at the failure which meets the immediate attempt of an actor to secure information; but he may become quite sorry for the actor who is, at the close of such an attempt, "in wrong."

More stories are refused by editors because the characters are hazy than because of failures in plotting. They ought never to have been sent by the writers. By far the largest number of stories are refused because the readers could not find anything to win their interest, or their sympathy, or even their tolerance for the actors. The authors ought never to have expected the editor to be interested on behalf of his readers. The editors usually know just what their readers want. Almost invariably they want characters with whose aims they can sympathize and become partisan.

In the Case Book, in my analysis of the story "Jake Bolton, 551" I have shown you how a story of accomplishment can be built up from a series of happenings. From that analysis you will learn that eventually all stories, no matter what the starting point, really boil down to a visualization in your own

consciousness of an actual actor. He may be the composite of several people, or he may be the prolongation of a single trait as in the case we have just examined. But there can be no reality to your story until you are aware of an actual person, even though he is an invented person, and have so perfected your craftsmanship that you can make this actuality apparent to your readers.

In choosing character traits for any actor in your story you will be careful to have those character traits consistent. You will not have, for example, a character who is both selfish and unselfish, because those character traits would be hard to reconcile in the same person, although it is always to be borne in mind that almost anything can be made plausible to a reader through good grading. A thorough study of this final lesson is essential to a complete understanding of this lesson, but in studying it you will be helped very much by reviewing the other lectures in the course, and by a careful reading of the Case Book. Such a reading and study should convince you definitely that all stories are based upon character. You may first conceive a scene, that is, you may wish to prove that, as in "Jake Bolton" I wished to prove, a man of character can make good in the army despite getting a bad name. But you must very quickly go from the general to the particular, and find a character who will exemplify this theme for you. You may begin with a situation, but it is obvious that as soon as you do there must be a character who, by reacting to a condition, has caused this situation. You may begin with a conflict which is very interesting, but again it will be clear that in its fifth step this conflict forms a crisis, which, if it is not a situation, must be a conclusive act or a turning point of furtherance or hindrance to a situation, and again you come back to the necessity for showing a character confronted by a situation. Whether that situation is one of accomplishment or decision is your own choice.

Characterization, then, plus structure make up a short-story. The characterization is usually done in the presentation unit, the structure coming from the fifth step.

In this final lecture a few words of general advice will not be out of place. Characterization and plotting go hand in hand. Of characterization there is nothing to be feared except that it is the illustration of traits in action. Of plotting it is necessary only to say that a narrative problem that is a main situation is either led up to by a series of interchanges, or is the starting point for a series of interchanges. It must lend itself to development through a number of encounters which, in the body of the story of accomplishment, sustains interest. When you have presented the central problem to your readers as a main situation your task then consists in developing the promises of conflict in the story. Again you see the necessity for being able to see your story in scenes. The exception is the decision story in which the development is backward instead of forward, and again the requirments for seeing your story in scenes is an essential.

Remember always that the story is interesting in proportion as it contains interesting conflict. The first scene or two scenes are usually employed to plant the seed of the conflict for the following scenes. No seeds should be planted that are NOT to be used. No information is to be given that can be dispensed with. Never have scenes between friends—always between enemies, or between friends whose purposes at the time make them temporarily enemies. Remember ordinarily that there is no such thing as a love story. Usually what you will write is a story with a love interest. There are rivals in love who will clash. A wants B and so does C. B is the prize. Occasionally there is the type story in which the interest lies in the misunderstanding between the two people who are really in love. Finally, remember that information is the dullest part of writing. Do not try to inflict it upon your readers except by softening it through interesting characterization and clash. That is to say, if you have much to tell GET TWO PEOPLE TO CARRY THE TRUNK.

OTHER FORMS OF FICTION

ALTHOUGH so far we have dealt exclusively with the short-story, our discussion of fiction would not be complete without considering the other forms: the serial, the novelette, the novel, the play, and the "movie." In all of these forms, the basic principles which we have been considering remain always the same. Presentation units bring about crises in the plot. These crises may be either narrative or dramatic. They are most effective when they are dramatic. Drama in any form of fiction can be achieved in two ways: from the clash in the presentation unit, or from the hint of ultimate frustration in the crisis which is the fifth step. This fifth step must be present, even though the presentation unit itself may not have all the four steps of a complete scene.

In its interior arrangement each form of fiction is exactly like the other forms. It is built about an interchange between two forces, ordinarily two human beings, at moments when their purposes or their interests conflict and cause them to clash.

The difference between the various forms (the short-story, the serial, the novelette, the play, and the novel) is in the limitations which each imposes upon the writer, or in the scope which each permits the writer. The short-story is freer from technical limitations than is the play. On the other hand, it is extremely limited in its scope. The material with which it deals must be capable of expression, ordinarily within the limits of 5,000 to 7,000 words; although there are notable exceptions, as in the stories which appear in the *Saturday Evening Post.*

All forms of fiction are fundamentally art; and are success-

ful, as all art is, only in so far as they create an illusion of reality. The short-story, while it has greater freedom than sculpture or painting, is concerned primarily with a single great moment in the life of a central actor. Unlike sculpture or painting, the short-story presents this moment and its outcome as a passage of time. It shows what the character does in regard to that crisis in his career. Sculpture or painting, in distinction from this, present only the great moment itself or the action which the actor takes on becoming aware of the crisis.

The short-story presents the crisis, the struggle, and the conclusion. Between the moment that the crisis is presented to the audience and the moment the conclusion is presented to the audience, there has been a definite lapse of time. There may also have been a great many changes of background or setting, against which the action is presented. It is in the freedom with which he may change time or place that the short-story writer finds himself at a greater advantage than does the writer of the play.

The Play

As soon as a writer begins presenting his material in the medium of the play he is at once confronted with definite limitations. He is confined in presentation units almost entirely to episodes and scenes either episodic or dramatic. Incidents are almost entirely barred. When Harry Leon Wilson's story, "Merton of the Movies," appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post,* one of the most effective presentation units was the series of incidents in which Merton is shown talking with the old delivery horse in the pasture. In the play, "Merton of the Movies," because of the restrictions which force a dramatist to a definitely limited number of backgrounds and because of the impracticability of having a horse upon the stage, this material had to be included in another scene.

Strangely enough, the dramatist while presenting his material in dramatic form was forced to use the narrative method.

In the scene which followed in time sequence he had one of the actors *tell* another actor about what Merton had done in bidding good-bye to the horse. In this way the effectiveness of the incidents was largely lost; because the audience, instead of becoming aware of those incidents as a direct stimulus, became aware of them only as they had been presented through the consciousness of a minor actor.

The restrictions of the play as opposed to the short-story are: first, that a very limited number of changes of scene are possible; second, that no analysis of motive is possible during the action or interchange; and finally, and most important, that no fifth step in terms of the reflection of a character on what has passed is permissible.

It may be urged that in "Strange Interlude" Mr. Eugene O'Neill has caused his characters to voice their thoughts or motives in "asides." This is not new. The old melodramas used it. It went out of style because it was really the engrafting upon the technique of one medium the technique of another. Whether it will have any profound effect upon the writing of future plays is questionable. It may also be urged that in "Emperor Jones" Mr. O'Neill caused his chief actor to give a very vivid representation of the emotional state of an actor who tells in detail what is going on in his consciousness. But this is merely a rather prolonged interpretation of the old "soliloquy."

In general, then, it is safe to say that the average writer of plays will find himself confronted by the restrictions and limitations of his medium, and that he must find within the scope of that medium the technical devices for overcoming those handicaps. The first one, the rendering of separate incidents, will cause him very little difficulty because he has available the device which Mr. Harry Leon Wilson used in transferring his story to the theatre. He will cause actors to *tell about what has happened* during the process of an interchange concerned primarily with some other purpose. The analysis of thoughts which is denied to him during the process of an interchange he will cause to be *shown in pantomime* or in the exclamatory speech of an actor to another actor.

The technical problem which will occasion him the most difficulty is the problem of transferring the fifth step of the scene in a story to the scene in a play. In the short-story the writer may pause and in terms of what the character is thinking sum up the crisis in the plot. It may be a dramatic crisis as it presents the hint of ultimate frustration, or a narrative crisis as it presents a temporary defeat at that immediate moment.

In the play this opportunity for analysis is denied to him, unless he causes his actor to indulge in a soliloquy.

This he will hesitate to do because of its unconvincingness. But his knowledge of technical devices will cause him to realize that *thoughts are unspoken words,* and that words may be used to express reflections. It will also cause him to realize that where there is much to be spoken it is better to have an interchange.

For example: a policeman in a detective play is examining a suspect. When he has completed his examination, and has abandoned his attempt to get further information from the suspect, he dismisses him. Then there comes naturally the fifth step, which in a short-story would be presented as reflections. In the play this policeman, after the suspect's departure, will confer with another policeman, or with somebody in sympathy with him, to whom he will explain his suspicions and his doubts, particularly his feeling that the task has grown increasingly difficult, that the explanation is more and more shrouded in mystery, and that the hope of ultimate solution is further than ever away. In this way he makes the audience aware of a dramatic crisis in the plot by keeping the audience in suspense as to the ultimate outcome. When the cumulative effect of a number of the dramatic hindrances has reached a major turning point, he emphasizes it by having what the dramatists call a "curtain" at the close of an act.

In general, therefore, it may be said that the limitations of the drama can all be overcome by a competent craftsman; and that a play has exactly the same structural elements as a story, with this difference. In a play there may be, in addition to the central purpose or central problem of the leading actor, certain

cross currents of problems which are those of minor actors in the play. At certain points these cross each other and form crises. Usually, in the short-story, the conflict of purposes is between the actor and the chief opponent; and all other actors line up usually on one side or the other. In the play, actors other than the main actor and his opponent may be opposed to *both* the main actor and his opponent, instead of lining up on one side or the other.

It is safe to say, however, that the essential functions of the play are the same as those of the short-story: to set forth a condition presenting a central problem, to show the action of a set of people affected by that problem, and to show what is done by them about it in terms of their different character reactions.

Just as there are different kinds of stories, so there are different kinds of plays, running from the purely entertaining to the instructive and significant. Audiences have, of recent years, come to expect significance in every serious play. Thus the writer of a play is likely to be concerned more than the writer of a story with the thesis or moral significance of the action.

The Novel

As soon as we begin to consider theme or significance we almost automatically are forced to survey the field of the novel. One of the essential qualities of the novel is its freedom from the restrictions and limitations of the drama. It has all the scope and freedom of the short-story with the added advantage of having a great deal of room in which to turn around. Analysis is not forbidden; it is, in fact, encouraged. Analysis of an actor's thoughts emphasizes crises in the plot or pattern. In all forms of fiction it is the crises which give the pattern to the material. These crises usually occur in the novel as the high points in the life of an actor. But in the novel, more than in the short story, you may be interested not only pictorially in the actor, but panoramically, in life. You may be con-

cerned not only with the life of an individual at a certain great moment, as in a short-story or play; but also with the life of an individual at a number of great moments.

In addition to this, you may deal with the background and the conditions surrounding the individual which have an effect upon building his character. You may show the changes that go on in communities and in civilization, and you may draw from the pictures you present a definite significance.

In plays and in short-stories the crises are normally what give interest to the material; these, and the interchanges that are interspersed between crises of the plot. But in the novel, while you are interested in these interchanges, you are also interested in a great many ramifications that deal with the lapse of time between those turning points.

In the short-story usually you avoid pauses of any kind, dealing with lapses of time very swiftly in transitional sentences and transitional paragraphs. In the novel, on the other hand, in the pauses at the crises between the scenes you pick up the thread of your theme and you enlarge upon it. There is thus added to the function of the novelist as above that of the short-story writer, dissertation. The great bulk of a novel may be dissertation in regard to your theme.

By the theme of a novel I mean what is sometimes referred to as the moral, or the significance, or the message of a novel. You have something to prove and you use the novel as a vehicle. It may be your belief that we are likely, through living in a standardized age, to become as standardized as the machinery about us. This, for example, is the theme or message of most of Sinclair Lewis's books.

It is in dealing with the period of transition that the method of the novel differs most from the method of the short-story. In the short-story it is usually dealt with in a single swiftly moving paragraph and frequently in a single swiftly moving sentence. You may say something like this: "Her prophecy came true within a week"; or you may say: "It took only a week for this prophecy to be brought more definitely to her attention"; or: "At the close of the week, when she saw him

again, she was reminded of what he had said at the last meeting."

As opposed to this, the period of transition in a novel may occupy the space of a chapter during which the writer will show the effect of various stimuli upon the character of the chief actor during the week between the two meetings; or he may go on with an entirely new and distinct series of happenings as they affect another actor in the story.

The novel may be said to vary from the short-story and the play most particularly in the development and expansion of the fifth step. In the other forms the chief function of the fifth step is to make clear a turning point or crisis in the plot. In the novel the chief function of the fifth step is to show a growth or deterioration of character.

In the play and in the short-story the characters are almost always static. There is very little progress or retrogression. They are like people who get upon a street car and ride a certain distance. During the ride they meet and clash with other people, but when they get out they are essentially the same people as when they entered. The novel is to the play and the short-story what a long railroad journey is to a short trolley ride.

An actor at the opening of a novel is shown as possessing certain beliefs, illusions, or convictions. A crisis in that person's life is presented, and it may involve the presentation of a scene or several scenes, but at its close the character is a different person. Some of the illusions have been destroyed, some of the convictions or prejudices have been obliterated, or have been strengthened and more deeply entrenched; and the proportioning of the different traits in the character has been changed. This pattern is repeated until, at the end of a successful novel, the reader is aware that he has watched the development, either backward or forward, of a character.

The Novelette or Serial

It is difficult to make any rigid distinction between a novelette and a serial. We might say that a serial is a long short-

story and that a novelette is a short novel. It is only necessary, however, to understand that somewhere between the high word-limit of the short-story and the low word-limit of the novel there is a form which may be either a novelette or a serial. I merely mention these forms as existing because what I have said in regard to the short-story may be accepted as applicable to the longer form of the serial.

The chief essential difference is that in the serial the installments shall always end upon a note of what might almost be called hysteria, a sense of something sinister and menacing about to take place.

This also applies to some extent to the novelette, except that in the true novelette there shall also be a growth of character, that the person at the conclusion of each installment shall be different from what he was at the beginning of the installment. You will see, therefore, that the only distinction which I make between the serial and the novelette is that the serial does not necessarily deal with developing character; whereas the novelette, if it be true to its classification, should contain the element of character development.

The Moving Picture

At present there is a great deal of uncertainty as to the future of the moving picture industry because of the introduction of the so-called "talkie." Nobody can prophesy with any accuracy as to the effect the spoken movie will have upon the silent movie. It is my conviction that after a period of readjustment there will simply be added to the forms of expression in fiction a new form, and that the silent and the spoken movie will go on side by side.

From the point of view, however, of the person who proposes to write with the thought of ultimate presentation upon the screen, I can only say that all the evidence and all experience so far points to one thing. Movies are an adaptation of some other form of fiction and they have not encouraged nor are they likely to encourage original writing. It is, therefore, much

better for the writer who hopes to have his material presented upon the screen to have it appear first in some magazine, as a short-story, a novelette, or a serial, or between covers as a novel, or upon the legitimate stage. The day will undoubtedly come when moving picture scenarios will be written by trained people directly for the screen; but the industry is not as yet educated to a point where they are willing to consider such a method seriously.

The Financial Expectations of the Fiction Writer

In summing up, it might not be amiss to say a word or two in regard to the rewards which the writer may expect from the different forms of fiction.

The short story is unquestionably the form for which there is the greatest demand. It requires perhaps a higher degree of craftsmanship than any other form. It may be 95% good and still be rejected. A great many writers who have reached almost the crest of the hill stop too soon. Almost invariably, however, it has been my experience that the educated and intelligent person who is willing to undergo the gruelling drill of the preparatory years and who learns to rebound from disappointment eventually succeeds in the field of the short-story.

The payment for the average first short-story is from $100 to $500, depending upon its quality and the magazine to which it sells. The income of a successful writer, on the other hand, varies from $20,000 to $100,000 a year. Yet people essaying the mastery of such a highly-paid profession will write perhaps half a dozen stories which are rejected and will then give up the attempt. In other professions such as law and medicine, people approach them after a training period of from four to eight years and do not expect any payment during the preparatory period. Writing is one of the few professions which receive pay during the apprenticeship period, particularly in the field of the short-story, the novelette, and the serial.

The novel, on the other hand, is from the point of view of revenue much more uninviting. A good novel will usually take

from one to two years to complete. It may take from three to six months to sell, from three to six more for manufacturing and printing; and then the writer will have to wait another six months before his first royalty check is available. Meanwhile he must have other means of support. His natural tendency is to turn toward the short-story, which in addition to its quick turnover, has the speculative element as well.

A short-story which sells for $250 to a magazine may be produced as a movie with a $2500 fee. A more important story from a well known writer selling in the vicinity of $2000 to a large circulation magazine, will earn from its movie rights, $10,000.

One novel, however, will bring to a writer usually more prestige than a hundred short-stories.

Of all forms of fiction, the play is the most speculative. A good short-story and a good novel are almost always snapped up. A good play, on the other hand, may go begging. Even though it is produced, some factor quite apart from its soundness as a work of art may spell its doom. The enticing feature of playwriting, however, is that a "smash" will make the author wealthy.

In general, then, we may sum up by saying that the writer who wishes to make a quick and sure income with a certain flavor of speculation about it would do well to master the craftsmanship of the short-story, keeping in mind that his stories may sometimes be sold as movies.

The writer who has something to say, some strong and definite feeling about life, may express it in the medium of the play or the novel. In a novel it is much more likely to have a wide and continuous audience, although it is not as likely to be so remunerative as either a successful play or a successful movie. If his nature is speculative, or if he feels drawn particularly to the field of the drama, then for him the play is the medium; but he must keep in mind that the writing of plays is full of "grief." Delays and disappointments are the rule rather than the exception; and the play is above all a gamble.

O. Henry once advised writers to write "what pleases you."

This is a very sound piece of advice, but it should be tempered by the further advice to write what pleases you in the medium for which your temperament best fits you.

Every writer must sooner or later decide between two courses: to write what he wants to write regardless of financial reward, or to write only with the financial reward in view. Sometimes a writer's temperament is such that he can without any sacrifice of artistic integrity write what is in demand. Such writers are ideally fortunate. But it has been my observation that there are a number of writers who are very unhappy because they have been writing material which after a while becomes distasteful. If they have been sufficiently successful financially to establish a fund which will enable them to stop writing when the saturation point is reached, they are in an enviable position. But the temperament which makes writers is usually the buoyant temperament which prevents them from being good business people, and they find themselves at middle age unhappy because they have neither the financial nor the spiritual reward which comes from a lifetime devoted to the production of fiction.

In closing this book, therefore, I feel it incumbent upon me to give a word of practical advice to the prolific producer of fiction material. It is to keep in mind that a day may come when either voluntarily or involuntarily you will find yourself in a position where the further production of fiction will become, instead of a pleasure, a slavery. Against that day you should from the very outset make financial provision.

But this advice, of course, is premature. It is only for the person who has already served his term of apprenticeship and whose work is in demand. The first step toward this enviable position is a mastery of craftsmanship.

I trust that this volume, used in conjunction with the Case Book, will cut down for writers the arduous period of apprenticeship.

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